THE LIFE OF

JEAN-JACQUES OLIER

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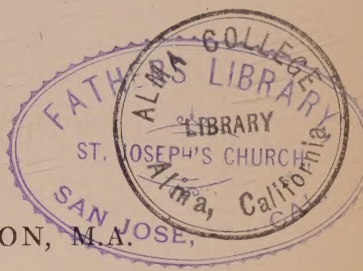
THE LIFE

OF

JEAN-JACQUES OLIER,

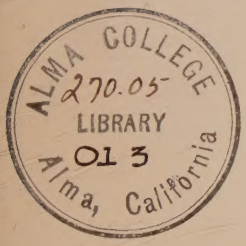
FOUNDER OF THE SEMINARY
OF ST. SULPICE.



BY

EDWARD HEALY THOMPSON, M.A.

Tempus est ut incipiat judicium a domo Dei.
1 PET. iv. 17.



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TO

THE SECULAR CLERGY

OF ALL ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

THIS LIFE OF

A GREAT PASTOR OF SOULS,

A TRUE AND INTREPID REFORMER,

AND

THE FOUNDER OF AN ECCLESIASTICAL SEMINARY

WHOSE PRAISE IS IN ALL THE CHURCHES

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED.

ADVERTISEMENT.

—o—

THIS Life of the holy Founder of the Community and Seminary of St. Sulpice is grounded almost entirely on the great work of the Abbé Faillon, which may justly be styled one of the most complete and exhaustive biographies which were ever written. That work was first published in two volumes, but was subsequently extended by the author into three; and it is on the lines of this enlarged edition that the present Life has been constructed.

In utilising the materials so abundantly provided, the writer, while abridging or condensing some of the numerous extracts from M. Olier's writings which admitted of compression, or incorporating the substance of them in the narrative, has proceeded uniformly on the plan of giving all interesting details, whether historical or personal, and has not unfrequently introduced into the body of the work some of the striking traits contained in the copious notes with which M. Faillon's volumes are furnished. To represent the man and his mission in the world,—to bring out in full relief the idea with which he was possessed and the principles by which he was guided,—has been his main endeavour; he has, moreover, made it a special object to preserve what constitutes an attractive feature in the original work, the notices of M. Olier's contemporaries, many of whom were persons not only distinguished for eminent spiritual attainments, but favoured with high supernatural gifts, and has been careful to retain all such incidental particulars as serve to illustrate the state of religion in France and what may be called the religious habits of society at the time. For this reason, among others, he has given in foot-notes a short account of some among the most famous shrines of our Lady and other places of pilgrimage which were the objects of popular devotion; and it has been a matter of no slight interest to him to observe in how many instances that devotion has

in the present day re-assumed its ancient forms in defiance of the prevailing impiety and unbelief.

M. Faillon enjoyed one inestimable advantage, as compared with M. Olier's previous biographers, in having access to the *Mémoires* which the servant of God composed in obedience to his director, the Père Bataille; a task which he performed with all the simplicity and sincerity of a child. These *Mémoires* were of two kinds: one recording the lights vouchsafed him on a variety of religious subjects; the other containing, together with many notable passages of his life, a particular account of the dealings of God with his soul, his interior trials and supernatural favours, and the mysterious ways by which he was prepared and fashioned by Divine grace for his extraordinary mission. The first was composed with the persuasion that it would one day be published, and serve to the edification of souls; the second was intended for the eyes of his director alone, a fact which it is necessary to note, as explaining why we find him entering into so many personal details, and employing terms which, but for the positive command of his spiritual guide, would have been repugnant to the humility of one who regarded himself with so little esteem. Each sheet, as it was written, was put into P. Bataille's hands, who, after the death of his saintly penitent, committed the whole of the papers to the keeping of the Directors of the Seminary.

In the latest edition of his work M. Faillon was enabled to make use of some important materials with which he was previously unacquainted, and which came into his possession in a remarkable manner. Frequent mention is made in this history of the holy widow, Marie Rousseau, to whose prayers and counsels M. Olier was so deeply indebted in the matter both of his conversion and of his vocation, and who took so prominent a part in the establishment of the Seminary and the reformation of the parish of St. Sulpice. In his *Mémoires* the servant of God had said that by order of her director, the Père Bataille, who, as we have seen, was also his own, she had set down many things in writing; but her papers were supposed to have perished, as none of M. Olier's biographers, not even M. de Bretonvilliers, had mentioned them, and no allusion had been made to them by other Sulpicians in later times. They were destined, however, in the good Providence of God, to be recovered by what seemed the merest accident. M. Faillon was meditating the preparation of a new edition of his work when, in

1867, an ecclesiastic who had been a student of the Seminary, disappointed at not finding a certain Director whom he wished to consult, enquired what other priests were in the house, as he was unwilling to leave without conferring with some one on the matter about which he had come. He was accordingly referred to the Abbé Faillon, whom he had not seen for thirty years. In the course of a conversation which appeared to have nothing in it of interest to a man of studious habits like the Abbé, the ecclesiastic in question happened to remark that the Bibliothèque Nationale possessed the manuscript *Mémoires* of Marie Rousseau, an announcement which took M. Faillon by surprise, as he had instituted a diligent search for any materials which might be available for his projected work. Even then he experienced considerable difficulty in finding the precious writings, as they were not entered in the catalogue of the Library under their proper heading. At length his efforts were crowned with success, and he had the satisfaction of seeing lying before him no less than thirteen manuscript volumes in quarto, each containing from a thousand to twelve hundred closely written pages. The handwriting, not always Marie's own but that of her amanuensis, was hard to decipher, the style was rugged and confused, and no order was observed in the choice of subjects, which had been jotted down day by day just as they were suggested to her mind, without any regard either to method or to sequence. Nothing daunted, however, by the difficulty of the task, M. Faillon read the papers through and, pen in hand, made such extracts as he deemed suitable for his purpose; and with them he enriched his last and greatly enlarged edition of M. Olier's Life.*

Marie Rousseau had delivered her writings to P. Bataille, paper by paper, as each was finished, but, on his quitting the Abbey of St. Germain and, indeed, the Reform of St. Maur itself, he, by order of the Chancellor, Pierre Séguier, who had himself often profited by the lights of the saintly widow, restored them to her. She subsequently consigned them to the charge of the Chancellor, at whose death they passed into the possession of his grandson, Henri-Charles du Cambout-Coislin, Bishop of Metz. This prelate, who was the Abbé *commendataire* of St. Germain-des-Près, bequeathed the manuscripts to that wealthy abbey, wealthy no less in its literary

* The work was completed by M. Faillon and got ready for press, but was not given to the world till after his death, which took place on October 25th, 1870. It was published in 1873.

stores than its temporal possessions, from which at the Revolution they were transferred, with all the other contents of the abbatial library, to the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The writings extended from the year 1640 to the year 1649, the very interval of time during which M. Olier composed his own *Mémoires;* and some things which he had not mentioned, or had not explained, were related or were elucidated by this singularly gifted woman. Especially was this the case in respect to certain interesting details concerning the personal history of the servant of God and, above all, to his extraordinary successes in reforming the vast suburb of Paris so notorious for its immorality and impiety.

The present writer feels that he will have done good service if the account which he has here given of the life and labours of this great man—his eminent virtues and marvellous gifts—shall induce the reader to peruse or, rather he would say, to study M. Faillon's admirable work. It is no common biography. Replete as it is with a great variety of moving incidents, it is a very mine of spiritual wealth. The notes which are affixed to every chapter would themselves form an interesting and instructive volume. "It is a book," wrote Cardinal Wiseman to the Abbé Faillon, "which cannot be read too often, and which may always be read with renewed profit. Accept, then, the assurance of my lively gratitude for the very great service you have rendered to the clergy and to the Church by your valuable work."

That the spirit of M. Olier still lives and reigns in the Seminary which he founded, will be evident to any one who will make himself acquainted with the biographies of some among the many holy men who in recent times have illustrated the Community by their deep spirituality, fervent piety, and sacerdotal zeal, as well as by their solid learning: e.g. M. Mollevaut, Superior of the Solitude; M. Hamon, Curé of St. Sulpice; M. de Courson, 12th Superior General of the Seminary; M. Teysseyrre, Founder of the *Petite Communauté des Clercs de Saint-Sulpice;* and M. Faillon himself, author of many biographical and historical works; to whom may be added the young martyr of the Commune, Paul Seigneret, tonsured clerk and seminarist.* Men animated by such a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice are well fitted to cope with and, as it may be hoped, to withstand and overcome the machinations and assaults of the atheistic crew

* See the touching memoir of his life and death, an abridged translation of which was published by Washbourne in 1873.

which is permitted by God, whose ways are unsearchable, to sway the destinies of France in these deplorable times.

M. Olier's "Complete Works" were collected and published by the Abbé Migne in 1856. The list is as follows :—

Introduction à la Vie et aux Vertus Chrétiennes.
La Journée Chrétienne.
Explication des Cérémonies de la Grand' Messe.
Catéchisme Chrétien pour la Vie Intérieure.
Traité des Saints Ordres.
Lettres Spirituelles. (260 in number.)
Extraits des Mémoires manuscripts de M. Olier sur les Vertus Chrétiennes et les Grâces Particulières dont il fut favorisé, recueillis par l'Auteur de sa Vie.
L'Esprit d'un Directeur des Ames.
Regulæ artis artium, quæ est regimen animarum.
Avis salutaires aux Ministres du Seigneur.
Examen sur les Vertus Chrétiennes et Ecclésiastiques.
Pietas Seminarii.
Discours sur Saint François de Sales.
Sentiments sur les Grandeurs de Saint Joseph.

An additional work entitled *Vie Intérieure de la Très-Sainte Vierge*, composed of various writings on the virtues, glories, and special prerogatives of the Immaculate Mother of God, which were found among M. Olier's papers, was published in 1875 with the approbation of the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, who declared it to be "greatly calculated to inspire souls with devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to lead them to the imitation of her virtues." An earlier edition, which contained passages of a dubious character, was withdrawn from circulation almost immediately after it had been issued. Consisting of numerous detached fragments, which had never been subjected to the author's revision or prepared by him for publication, this collection of writings, loosely put together, attributed to him ideas and opinions which he had never deliberately adopted, and made him responsible for expressions the inaccuracy of which, on careful re-perusal, he would have detected and amended. The work, as now corrected and bearing the *imprimatur* of ecclesiastical authority, is entirely free from all such blemishes, and is interesting as conveying M. Olier's personal views and reflections on the mysteries of which it treats.

The following remain still in manuscript:—1. Traité des Attributs de Dieu; 2. Des saints Anges; 3. De la Création du Monde; 4. Le Maître des Exercises; 5. Sur l'Oraison Dominicale; 6. De la Vie Divine; 7. Panégyriques de plusieurs Saints; 8. Mémoires, 9 or 10 volumes.

The first edition of this biography formed the 20th and concluding volume of the series published by Messrs. Burns and Lambert under the general title of the "Popular Library," of which the present writer was, after the issue of the first four volumes, the sole remaining editor.

The present revised and much extended edition was undertaken in response to recommendations which had reached the writer from more than one influential quarter, together with the expression of an earnest desire that the work should not be allowed to fall into oblivion. He has therefore ventured to reproduce it in a form more worthy of its subject and better calculated, as he hopes, to engage the attention of the English-speaking public.

He trusts he may be excused for citing here the gratifying testimony to the merits of the first edition, which he received from the late Very Reverend Paul Dubreul, D.D. Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice at Baltimore, U.S., including as it does a spontaneous expression of approval on the part of the Abbé Faillon himself. The letter from which the following extract is made is dated May 21st, 1865.

"Allow me to address to you the sincere thanks of the Community over which I preside for the real service you have rendered to the English-speaking clergy by the two very interesting Lives which you published some time ago: one of St. Charles Borromeo and the other of M. Olier. In reading the latter, we have felt the happiness of children at finding a perfect likeness of a venerated and beloved father; and, in listening to both your biographies, everyone in the Seminary has pronounced them to be, not only an excellent contribution to English Catholic literature, but a real good work accomplished towards the edification and the sanctification of the clergy.

"It is grateful to me to add, as it will be to you to know, that a few years ago, having among us, in Baltimore, the

author of M. Olier's large life, in French, 2 vols., from which you have so successfully drawn your own sketch, we read your production to him, but at the same time translating it rapidly, which, no doubt, detracted much from the effect it produces on all those who can understand it in English; nevertheless, he expressed himself highly pleased with the work, and I remember having heard him say, 'I like this Life at least as much as my own abridgment.* It is really an excellent Life.'"

In conclusion, the writer desires to render his grateful acknowledgments to the Rev. Father Keogh, of the London Oratory, for his kindness in undertaking the office of censor and for the completeness with which he has executed his toilsome task; for, not content with bestowing his careful attention on matters which lay within the limits of his official cognisance, he has been pleased to extend it to the minutest particulars; so that, if the work prove to be exceptionally free even from typographical errors, the result is largely owing to his close and patient revision. For this liberal aid the writer feels that no ordinary thanks are due.

PERY LODGE, CHELTENHAM.
Feast of Corpus Christi, 1885.

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* This abridgment of M. Faillon's work the present writer has never seen, and was not aware of its existence until he received Dr. Dubreul's letter.

LETTER OF THE BISHOP OF SALFORD.

—o—

"Bishop's House, Salford,
"*June 18th*, 1882.

"My dear Mr. Healy Thompson,—I am very glad to hear that you are about to publish a larger and fuller Life of M. Olier. Raised up as he was by God to reform the secular clergy of France, M. Olier is a character that will always repay deep study. The education of the clergy is a work that must continue through all time, and those great men who have had a special and acknowledged vocation to undertake and carry it on in times of great difficulty must always stand out as landmarks in the ecclesiastical life of the Church and as models for imitation, or, at least, as examples for the encouragement of those who live in another age and in other countries.

"M. Olier is the type upon which the highest kind of French ecclesiastical life has been formed. It has in it much that is characteristic of the nation and peculiar to it. There is a certain military *raideur* and precision which belongs to the French people, and which always enters into their system of training. But, having said this, I have taken the only exception I could take against the Life of M. Olier, as a model in all respects for the English clergy. Exclude the elements which are peculiarly national and French, and all that remains is thoroughly appropriate to our present English needs.

"M. Olier's Life is a perfect mine of ecclesiastical thought and suggestion. I wish all our Ecclesiastical Colleges possessed many copies of it, so that it might form a kind of text-book both for superiors and for ecclesiastical students.

"I like treatises on perfection and upon the various virtues, and I have read a good many of them; but I must confess that I find nothing so useful, so helpful, and so interesting as the study of virtue *in the concrete*. To read the precepts and rules of the ecclesiastical life is, no doubt, profitable, but nothing is so apt to influence a person as to see them observed and practised in daily life. M. Olier's Life is a treatise on the perfection of the sacerdotal life reduced to practice. He was so bound by his position to make the ecclesiastical spirit his special study, that his Life abounds in the most apposite remarks, in profound reflections, and in most happy suggestions. It is the portraiture of the intellectual and spiritual life of a saintly man whose distinctive and exclusive vocation was the education and elevation of the secular clergy.

"I consider that your determination to give a lengthened and detailed Life of this great servant of God is a very wise one. A short Life may suffice for a brilliant historical sketch; it may be all that the multitude will have the time or the inclination to read. But the Life which is to work itself into the lives of other men, the Life which is to form their character and to become the subject of their constant admiration and imitation, must be detailed, and, so to speak, personal to the last degree. I remember, a few years ago, asking Lady Herbert to undertake the translation of the Life of the Venerable Bartholomew de Martyribus by four authors. It was proposed to cut it down to the dimensions of your first Life of M. Olier. I resisted, and urged that it should be given in all its fulness of detail, and the consequence has been that Lady Herbert's large Life of this wonderful servant of God has become a standard work on the ecclesiastical spirit and a perfect treasury for Priests and Bishops.

"Your large Life of M. Olier will become a companion Life to that of the holy Archbishop of Braga, and will form one of that series of profound works which is much needed in England for the formation and perfection of the ecclesiastical spirit.

"I feel sure that the English clergy, indeed the clergy of all

English-speaking countries, will be extremely grateful to you for giving them such a work as the one you have now finished.

"Wishing you every blessing, and with many thanks, believe me to be, my dear Mr. Healy Thompson, your faithful and devoted servant,

"✠ HERBERT BISHOP OF SALFORD."

PROTESTATION.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII. and other Sovereign Pontiffs, we declare that all the graces, revelations, and supernatural facts related in this work have only a human authority, and that, in all we have herein written of the holy life and exalted virtues of Jean-Jacques Olier, we submit ourselves without reserve to the infallible judgment of the Apostolic See, which alone has power and authority to pronounce as to whom rightly belong the character and title of Saint.

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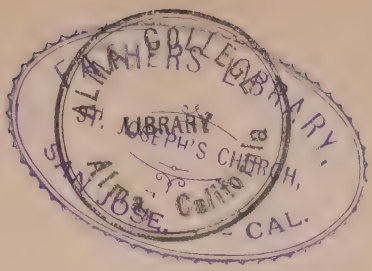

Part I.

CONVERSION AND VOCATION.

LIFE OF M. OLIER.

CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY YEARS. HIS CONVERSION.

IT would be little in accordance with the spirit or the mission of one who from early manhood was conspicuous for his love of poverty and his contempt of the world and its belongings, if his biographer were to commence the history of his life by descanting on the splendours of his ancestry. Suffice it, therefore, to say that he came of a distinguished family, which had borne many of the highest offices in the State and had gained itself an honourable name in various departments of the public service. His father was Jacques Olier de Verneuil, Secretary and Maître des Requêtes to Henri IV., who, in the year 1599, espoused Marie Dolu, Dame d'Ivoy, in Berry. As is often observable in the case of those whom God has chosen to accomplish any great work for His glory, both parents, although (as we shall see) they showed a culpable eagerness to promote their son's worldly advancement, were diligent in the performance of their religious duties, and edified their household by their truly Christian virtues.

They had eight children, four sons and four daughters. The third son, who is the subject of this biography, was born at Paris, on Saturday, September 20th, 1608, and on the same day received in baptism the name of Jean, by which he was always called in his own family. But in the world he was known as Jean-Jacques, the latter being the name of his patron, St. James the Less, which he took, as it would appear, at his confirmation.* In his *Mémoires* M. Olier says,

* In the *Dictionnaire de Biographie Chrétienne* published by the Abbé Migne, as also in the short Life prefixed to M. Olier's collected works, he is called the *second* son; but in neither of these publications is allusion made to another son,

borrowing the language of St. Paul,* "I renounce every relationship *according to the flesh.* Thanks to the mercy of God, I am dead to the generation of Adam. By baptism I made profession of death to my first birth, and I no longer live but for the second, which is truly glorious, seeing that by this generation I have God for my father, the Church and the Blessed Virgin for my mother, our Lord for my elder brother, all the Saints for my brethren, and the angels for my servants. O my God and my Father, grant me the grace never to esteem this world or its grandeur, which I am convinced is only vanity and folly."

Almost immediately after his baptism he was put out to nurse in the Faubourg St. Germain, and, what is worthy of remark, in the very parish with which his fame is for ever associated, that of St. Sulpice; as though (to adopt his own words) God was pleased that he should breathe in his earliest infancy the air of the place in which it was His will that he should serve Him in his maturer years. The street to which he was taken was called the Rue St. Sulpice,† and pious affection did not fail to note that as, when that prodigy of theological science, the great St. Thomas Aquinas, was a child, the surest way of quieting him was to put a book into his hands, so the infant who was destined in after life to shed such lustre on the priesthood was never better pleased than when he was carried by his nurse to the neighbouring church. The sight of its interior was sure to stop in an instant all cries and tears, when caresses and other attempts at diversion had failed of effect. This result, indeed, may be attributed to the natural force of novelty and change of scene on the mind of a little child, and not to any immediate influence of divine grace; but not so a circumstance which M. Olier has himself recorded. He was in his seventh year when, being in a church for

René, of whom we find incidental mention on more than one occasion. He was evidently older than Jean-Jacques, as, not only is he always named before him, but when Mme. Olier presented her three sons, including René, to St. Francis de Sales, she expressly calls Jean-Jacques the youngest. René died while M. Olier was preaching his first mission in Auvergne, and this may be the reason why the writers in question make no allusion to him, and designate Jean-Jacques as the second son. M. Faillon makes no explicit statement on the subject.

The eldest son was François, called de Verneuil, and the youngest Nicolas-Edouard, called de Fontenelle, whom M. Olier himself speaks of as his second brother, because, as already intimated, his elder brother René was dead.

* 2 Cor. v. 16.

† Known also as the Rue des Canettes from a sign on one of the houses, probably a tavern.

the purpose of hearing Mass, at the moment the priest passed on his way to the altar, the thought suddenly flashed upon him, how pure and holy must they be who are set apart to offer the Adorable Sacrifice. So deep was the impression made on his soul that it was never afterwards effaced. It seemed, he says, to his childish mind as though priests must live a life wholly hid in God; so that it was with wonder he saw them act like ordinary men while performing their awful function. Anything, even though it were but a movement of the head, which indicated that they were conscious of visible things around them was a surprise and a shock to him; he thought they were angelic beings the moment they had vested, or, at least, as soon as they had ascended the steps of the altar. It was, indeed, a childish ignorance, but it was no less an earnest of his own future vocation, and of the mission which, in the providence of God, he was designed to fulfil in sanctifying the clergy of France.

The devotion which his parents, and especially his father, entertained towards the Blessed Virgin was shared and, indeed, surpassed by this pious child. It was a pleasure to him to reflect that his mother's name was Marie, and that he was born in a street called Notre Dame d'Argent.* He never began his lessons without invoking the aid of his august Patroness, and it seemed to him as though he were unable to learn anything by heart unless he first repeated a *Hail Mary*. He would go and tell her in his childish way everything he was about to do, and ask her consent, preferring to act always, not as from any motive of his own, but simply at her bidding. When he had new clothes, though it were but a single article of dress, he would present himself humbly before her image in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and beg her never to let him offend her Divine Son as long as he should wear them. As he grew older he was tempted to omit this ceremony, as something irksome and absurd, which nobody thought of performing except himself; but he declares that he was very soon punished for his negligence, for scarcely a day was allowed to pass before his new clothes were lost, or torn, or visited

* So called from the silver image which was placed in a niche at the corner of the street by Francis I., in reparation for a sacrilegious outrage committed by the heretics. This image, however, having been stolen and replaced by another of less costly material, the street gradually resumed its old name of Roi de Sicile, which it took from Charles of Anjou, Count of Provence and King of Naples and Sicily, who had a mansion in it.

with some disaster, which he took as a warning not to refuse this act of homage to his heavenly Benefactress.

When he was eight years old he was put to school, where he displayed a quickness and a power of comprehension very remarkable in so young a boy. At the same time his natural liveliness of disposition began to develop itself in ways which gained for him among his elders a character for unruliness and insubordination which he scarcely deserved. He seems to have been one of those children whose faults are attributable rather to an exuberance of animal spirits, and an inability to control their physical energies, than to any spirit of disobedience or habitual self-will. The result, however, was, that he was always running risks and getting into trouble. His own account of himself is, that his recklessness and want of thought were so great that, but for the special interposition of Providence, he must frequently have been killed or crippled for life. "I never looked where I was treading, or whither I was going; I was for ever falling down, or running against something, and hurting myself. Once, I remember, I tumbled into a well, and had a most narrow escape of my life; at another time I fell with my head under a cart-wheel, which would have crushed it to pieces, but that for some unexplained cause the horse suddenly stopped. I was the source of continual anxiety to everybody in the house." With his mother he seems not to have been a particular favourite, and she thought to bring him into subjection by constantly chiding and chastising him; a method of proceeding which was calculated to have anything but a salutary effect on a high-spirited boy. "My mother," he says, "never gave me a moment's peace. No doubt I deserved such treatment, and I most humbly beg God's forgiveness, and her's too. I pray our Lord that I may contribute as much to the spiritual relief of my parents as I gave them trouble."

In the year 1617, his father being raised by Louis XIII. to the honourable post of Intendant of Lyons, the family quitted Paris and took up its residence in that city, where Jean-Jacques, with his brothers François and René, attended the classes of the Jesuit Fathers.* There his fearless and adventurous spirit soon found an occasion of indulging itself. One day, when playing with a

* In the August of 1621, M. Olier's father was sent to Aix in Provence to procure a subsidy from the States General of 100,000 crowns, wherewith to carry on the war against the Huguenots, who were endeavouring to set up a Republic

bird, it escaped from his hands and flew on the roof of the house. In an instant he had made the sign of the cross and, invoking his angel-guardian, had sprung from a window upon the roof and secured the truant; not, however, without raising a cry of alarm from those who had witnessed the hazardous feat, for the window from which he had leapt, and which was on the third storey, was below the level of the adjoining roof on which he had succeeded in alighting, and, had he missed his footing, he would have been dashed to pieces on the pavement below. "My master," he writes, "whom the noise had summoned to the spot, and who was seized with terror when he beheld my perilous position, punished me as I deserved; nor to this day can I think of the danger I so recklessly incurred without a shudder, and a fervent thanksgiving to God, who bestowed such fatherly care upon me at a time when I was quite unconscious of His mercies. May He grant me grace to expose my life as freely in His service as I then did for my own pleasure."

Being destined by his family to the ecclesiastical state, he had received the tonsure when he was eight years old, and, through an abuse which prevailed in France in those days, he had at the same time been put in possession of a benefice. But his restless activity and the heedlessness and almost violence of his disposition, which, instead of diminishing, increased as he grew older, appeared to his parents so incompatible with the moderation, gravity, and recollection which befit a priest, that they began to have serious misgivings on the subject of their son's vocation, and were preparing to turn their thoughts to some other profession, when their doubts were set at rest and their minds reassured by the authoritative voice of the great Bishop of Geneva, St. Francis de Sales. This holy prelate, on his occasional visits to Lyons, had been struck with the piety and rectitude of the Intendant, and had admitted him to his intimate friendship. The mother of our youth, fearful of offending God by thrusting into the sacred ministry one who was destitute of a true vocation, opened her heart to the Saint, and besought him to make the matter a subject of special

in France; and M. Faillon is of opinion that it was then that M. Olier, who accompanied his father, paid the visit to the tomb of St. Mary Magdalen of which he makes mention in his *Mémoires*, and was shown the head of the saint, having that portion of the flesh still uncorrupted on which our Risen Lord had laid His hand when He said to her, "Touch Me not."

prayer, in order to ascertain the Divine will. Francis acceded to her request, and the result we learn from M. Chaillard,* one of M. Olier's personal friends, who was present on the occasion. He had gone to assist at the Saint's mass in the chapel of the Visitation Convent at Lyons, when, on Francis leaving the altar, Mme. Olier presented her children to him for his blessing. The Saint embraced them one after another, and began speaking with affectionate interest about them all, when their mother interposed with renewed expressions of uneasiness respecting the youngest, Jean-Jacques, who, she said, was an unruly, headstrong boy, on whom correction was thrown away. "Well, well," said Francis mildly, "we must not be hard upon young people; high spirits are not a sin; and now take comfort from what I say, for I tell you that God has chosen this good child to promote His glory and to do great service in His Church." He then laid his hands on the boy's head, embraced him tenderly, and gave him his benediction.

Nor did the holy prelate's solicitude for the child end thus; he wished at once to aid in bringing about the accomplishment of his own prediction. He had long entertained a design of resigning his bishopric to his coadjutor, and retiring to a hermitage, beautifully situated on the borders of the Lake of Annecy, which he had caused to be restored. Here he intended devoting the remainder of his days to the training of young ecclesiastics; five or six cells were already constructed, and of one of these it was his wish that Jean-Jacques should be the occupant. He desired to have the boy always with him, and this desire was fully reciprocated by young Olier himself, who, from the day that St. Francis adopted him, in a manner, as his child, never called him by any other name than the endearing one of father. But this design, which was so full of promise both for the Church of France and for our pious youth, was not destined to be realized: a few days after, the labours of the Saint had ceased on earth, and he was gone to his glorious rest in Heaven. Francis was at this time in the train of the Duke of Savoy, whom he had accompanied to Avignon on his way to meet Louis XIII. at Lyons. M. Olier would fain

* M. Chaillard was subsequently doctor in theology, Protonotary of the Holy See, and Curé of Villefranche in Beaujolais. The Père de Nolay renders similar testimony, and reports the Saint's words, as given above. The incident was represented in a painting which, M. Faillon avers, may still be seen in the church of Ste. Madeleine at Besançon.

have had the Saint occupy a portion of his house, which was very spacious and close to the Convent of the Visitation, but Francis declined this and other similar offers of hospitality, by saying that, having foreseen the difficulty there might be of procuring suitable quarters, he had already engaged a lodging; and it was then discovered that he had fixed upon a little room belonging to the gardener of the convent, which was a very temple of the winds, and, moreover, was troubled with a smoking chimney. To all renewed offers of better accommodation the Saint did but pleasantly reply that he was never better than when he fared badly. In this comfortless apartment Francis de Sales was seized with his last illness, and hither thronged all the friends of the great Bishop, to beg his prayers and receive his benediction. In the crowd came Mme. Olier, with her children; it was the feast of St. John the Evangelist, Jean-Jacques's patron, and when Francis beheld the child of his election kneeling with tearful, earnest countenance at his bedside, can we doubt that the dying Saint, as he gently raised his hand and blessed him, poured out upon him all the tenderest feelings of a father's heart, and consecrated him, as it were, for the accomplishment of a work which himself had not had time even to commence? M. Olier, as may be supposed, ever throughout his life had recourse to the Saint's intercession with the most assured confidence; and, as we shall see in the course of this history, he believed that to him he was indebted for numerous and extraordinary graces.

Our youth had now reached his fourteenth year, a critical age for one of his impetuous nature and ardent temperament; but we have his own testimony to the fact that he was withheld by a peculiar operation of Divine grace from falling into irregular courses. If he were unhappily guilty of any infidelity, a cloud seemed to settle on his mind, otherwise so lively and active, and he was unable to apply himself to his studies. "I observed," he says, "that I lost all capacity of learning when I was out of the state of grace. No sooner did I commit any sin than my understanding seemed to become blocked and offuscated; and I could neither apprehend nor retain anything until I had been to confession. I remember well that, when I had to pass a public examination, I was obliged for a considerable time before to be careful to keep myself in the state of grace; and nothing at this time surprised me more than to see persons living in sin who nevertheless were good scholars and able

to learn with facility. I wondered how this could be, imagining that everybody was affected like myself." So marvellously was God pleased to guard this chosen soul from contracting early habits of sin; nor were these the only signs of the special protection with which he was favoured. One day, in his sixteenth year, he had swum across a wide river, intending to rest himself on the other side; but, finding strangers unexpectedly on the opposite bank, he attempted, from a motive of modesty, to return without recovering breath. Scarcely, however, had he reached the middle of the stream when he felt himself completely exhausted and unable to proceed. He was in the very act of sinking, when his foot caught the top of a stake which was fixed in the bed of the river, and on this he succeeded in steadying himself until assistance was rendered him. A deliverance from death, which depended apparently on so slight an accident, made a deep impression on his mind.

About this time he felt a strong desire to embrace the religious life, and his first attraction was towards the Carthusians, many of whose houses he visited as opportunity served; he next turned his attention to the Franciscans, and even went so far as to beg them to receive him; but it was the will of God that he should sanctify himself, and be instrumental in sanctifying others, in the secular life. At Lyons he finished the course of studies included in the humanities; and, in 1625, his father being promoted to the high office of a Conseiller d'État, our youth returned with his family to Paris, where he was entered at the far-famed University in that city. He had for his professor of philosophy one of the ablest men of the day, Pierre Padet, of the College d'Harcourt; and of the manner in which he acquitted himself in his new studies it is sufficient to say that it fully corresponded with the expectations which his friends had formed of him. A public act, which he kept in Latin and Greek, extending over the whole course of philosophy, was crowned with universal applause; and his professor paid him the compliment of declaring that in maintaining his thesis, as well as in his replies, he had achieved the highest success.

On leaving the College d'Harcourt he attended the schools of the Sorbonne, where he equally distinguished himself. His father spared no expense to obtain him the advantage of the best instructors, and gave him as his master in theology one of the most celebrated doctors of the time, Nicholas Le Maistre, who in the subsequent reign became Bishop of Lombez. Under the direction of this

learned and pious divine the young Olier made himself profoundly acquainted with the scholastic writers, and at the same time acquired a sound knowledge of Greek, which was of no little service to him in the study of the Holy Scriptures as well as of the Greek Fathers of the Church.

The honours he reaped at this time were so much the more flattering to his parents as they were due entirely to his own talents and exertions, and they began to indulge the most sanguine hopes of the distinguished part he was to play in the world. With his birth, connections, and personal advantages, it seemed to them that their son might attain to the highest dignities in Church and State. A miserable spirit of worldliness took possession of them, the more miserable and odious as exhibited in persons who made profession of piety, and who, indeed, under ordinary circumstances were accustomed to act from high religious motives. Not only did they cast about how best to secure the favour and influence of those who might further their child's advancement, but they even endeavoured to excite ambitious views in the youth himself, suggesting to him many little ways by which he could recommend himself to notice and promote his worldly prospects. Even while at Lyons, his father had procured him a second benefice, that of the Benedictine Priory of La Trinité at Clisson in the diocese of Nantes; he now obtained for him the richer preferment of the Abbey of Pébrac, belonging to the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, in the diocese of St. Flour (of which we shall hear more in the sequel), and to this was soon added a second priory, that of Bazainville, in the diocese of Chartres. Besides these substantial dignities, he was at the same time elected Honorary Canon of the Chapter of St. Julien de Brioude, a distinction which he shared with two bishops and a brother abbot. This was in 1626, when he had attained his eighteenth year; and now, in his quality of Abbé, although he had not yet received holy orders, he was entitled to preach; and, as preaching would be a means of exhibiting his talents before the world, he ascended the pulpit, and delivered himself of brilliant orations which gained him an extensive popularity, and were the especial delight of his infatuated mother, who, although, as it has been intimated, she had hitherto shown him no particular affection, could not resist the charms of an eloquence which tickled the ears and won the applause of the intellectual crowd. Now, at length, she seemed to have become sensible of her son's good qualities, when, as he says, "I had a throng of fine

people about me, and was all the fashion, preaching beautiful sermons, abounding in rhetorical tropes and vain conceits, but in which not a word was uttered against the manners of the world, its pride and its covetousness."

Jean-Jacques had now entered on his career of ambition, and, it must be added, of dissipation, with all the habitual ardour of his character. He was determined to become a great man, and to become a great man he must pay court to the great; and this could only be effectually accomplished by frequenting their assemblies and mixing in the high society of the capital. Behold, then, our future reformer as the gay young Abbé, the graceful courtier, the brilliant wit, the writer of epigrams, the utterer of smart sayings and pretty compliments in *salon* and in *boudoir*, with his retinue of servants, his couple of carriages, and his well-appointed household; for his parents grudged no expenditure which could help to give him consequence and conduce to his advancement. And well did the young man respond to their liberality: his address and good looks, the ease and frankness of his manners, the charm of his conversation, his incontestable abilities, joined to the consideration in which his family were held, obtained him a ready admittance into the highest circles; and so he enjoyed life, and made full use of his liberty, and was fast becoming an accomplished man of the world and a lover of its pleasures, if not a sharer in its vices; till at last his parents were filled with dismay at his dissipated habits, and awoke, as from an evil dream, to behold their child about to plunge into a vortex of sin, to the very edge of which they had themselves beguiled him by their criminal vanity and folly.

His mother, who, though not insensible to the world's attractions, had a great horror of sin, was deeply distressed, and never ceased to pray with tears to God for the conversion of her son; many holy souls also, who mourned in secret over the miseries of the time, made the young Abbé the subject of their intercessions; but there was one pre-eminently to whose prayers M. Olier always attributed the mercy he obtained, and who is so remarkable a person in herself, and plays so important a part in this history, as to call for more particular notice. This was Marie de Gournay, widow of David Rousseau, one of the twenty-five licensed victuallers of Paris. A country-girl of mean parentage, she retained in her married state, when she might have lived in ease and comfort, her predilections for a hard and simple life; and her humility was equal to her love of

poverty. So vile and little was she in her own eyes that she could not endure to spend upon herself; her clothes were never of the newest, and her food consisted for the most part of scraps which others had left. Her one sole study was to imitate the Blessed Mother of God, and in all things to conform her interior dispositions to those with which that incomparable Virgin performed her ordinary actions. Fearful of attracting the esteem of others, she avoided everything which might obtain her the character of being a person of piety, and during the twenty years she pursued her avocation, engaged continually in waiting on her guests, she never testified by speech or manner the intimate union she enjoyed with God. Not but that numbers who frequented the house were indebted to her for many spiritual blessings; and by some timely word, apparently of the simplest and most ordinary kind, she led many a hardened sinner to repentance on whom reproof and admonition had been expended in vain; still no one would have suspected the extraordinary sanctity that lay hid beneath an exterior in nowise distinguishable from that of a thousand other women of her class. At her husband's death she chose for herself one of the most uncomfortable rooms in the house, for it was so situated as never to be free from noise and bustle, from which she suffered much; but there she made a solitude for herself in which to commune alone with Him who was the one object of all her thoughts and affections. Her constant prayer was that God would take her to Himself; and so great were the satisfactions she derived from the reception of the Holy Eucharist, that It seemed to serve her for meat and drink, and she sometimes passed whole days without any other nourishment.

This poor woman, so humble in her origin, leading so obscure a life, and engaged in a calling which might have seemed singularly unfavourable to the attainment of spiritual perfection, had been possessed from her childhood with one longing desire,—that she might be instrumental in training and forming holy pastors, devoted to the cause of God, and in such ways as He in His sovereign wisdom should be pleased to ordain. For the fulfilment of this desire she offered up her prayers, her fastings, and her continual mortifications. One object of her devout aspirations she had already seen happily accomplished. The Benedictine Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés had long stood a dreary monument of departed glories, and its church had become well-nigh deserted. Thither she frequently went to pour out her heart to God in fervent supplications that he

would revivify this once famous monastery by restoring holy discipline and renewing the ancient spirit of the Order; and at length she had the consolation of witnessing the great reform of St. Maur established within its walls. This was effected in the year 1631, by the venerable Dom Grégoire Tarrisse, the first Superior-General.* But this reform was to her but an earnest of the great renovation which her soul desired, and for which she was ever praying,—the sanctification of the whole clerical body, and, in particular, the conversion of the vast parish in which she lived, so notorious for its impiety and wickedness. Now, she was constantly meeting in the streets a number of young clerics whose manners were a scandal to their profession. While leading a wholly secular life and squandering the revenues of their benefices in worldly pleasure and amusements, they were not ashamed to appear in clerical garb, and, simply from a motive of vanity and ostentation, to display themselves in habits of violet satin which their ecclesiastical position did not entitle them to assume.† Conspicuous among these was Jean-Jacques Olier. He was then in his twenty-first year, and one day when he was returning with a party of friends from the fair of St. Germain, a woman apparently of the lowest order, in a voice expressive of deep emotion, said to them, as they were standing at a tavern door, "Ah, Sirs, I have long prayed for your conversion, and I hope God will even yet hear my prayer." It was Marie Rousseau, whose perseverance and confidence in God were at length to have a most complete reward; for we learn from M. Olier himself that of five or six young Abbés, all of good family, who frequented a house by the side of St. Sulpice's church, separated from her own only by a wall, there was not one who ultimately did not yield to grace and quit the world to follow Christ. It was the first time that her attention had been drawn to the man who was destined by God to fulfil the object of her life, and she knew not why, but henceforth she made him the constant subject of her prayers. For himself, it would seem as if from that moment he felt moved to abandon the gay life he was leading; he was no longer at his ease, and would say

* The Reform of St. Maur was commenced in the Abbey of St. Augustine at Limoges in the year 1613, and was confirmed by Gregory XV. in 1627. The Congregation thus named comprised more than 180 abbeys and priories, and was governed by a Superior-General, who resided at the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés. The reform had the powerful support of Cardinal de Richelieu.

† Violet being the colour proper to bishops and prelates.

to his companions, "Somebody, I am sure, is pleading for me." The heavenly Mother for whom, amidst all his frivolity and sin, he had retained a tender devotion, had on her part not forsaken him; many of her holiest servants joined their prayers to hers; and now grace after grace was knocking at his heart, and, though eighteen months elapsed before his conversion was completed, the struggle with himself had already begun. "I did not love the world," he says; "I could not find any satisfaction in it, yet I was for ever falling, despite the sweet attractions of God's love, His unceasing solicitations, and the poignant remorse I was sure to suffer after sinning, nay, notwithstanding I sought the powerful aid of the sacraments of the Church."

Such was his state of mind when he determined on going into Italy, not for any object connected with his spiritual interests, but from a motive in which a desire of worldly distinction had a considerable share. Having lost the grace of God, he had acquitted himself only with ordinary success on the occasion of taking his degree of bachelor of arts, and he was resolved to recover his superiority. It was his ambition to excel, and to do something which should exalt him above the common herd of scholars and learned men; he therefore conceived the design of making himself master of Hebrew, with the view of maintaining some of his theses in that language at the Sorbonne. Only at Rome could he obtain the instruction he needed, and to Rome accordingly he repaired. But God had other designs respecting him. Scarcely had he arrived in the Eternal City when he was troubled with an inflammation of the eyes, which effectually prevented all application to study, excluded him from general society, and induced an apprehension that he might altogether lose his sight. The most skilful physicians failed to arrest the progress of the malady, and at length, all human means proving without avail, the sufferer bethought him of having recourse to supernatural aid, and he resolved to make a pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto, so famous throughout Christendom for the innumerable miracles of which it was the scene.*

He left Rome towards the end of May 1630, and notwithstanding

* For a detailed account of the Santa Casa, or Holy House, of Loreto, as well as of the evidences on which the tradition rests, the reader is referred to Provost Northcote's *Celebrated Sanctuaries of the Madonna* and to two valuable Lectures entitled *Loreto and Nazareth* by the late Father Hutchison of the London Oratory. The distance of Loreto from Rome is about a hundred miles.

the increasing heats, he, in a spirit of penance, retained his winter dress and commenced his journey on foot. Unaccustomed to laborious exercise, and enfeebled by the remedies which had been employed to mitigate his disorder, the fatigue, especially for the few first days, seemed too much for his strength; but he refreshed and encouraged himself with continual communings with God and His blessed Mother, sometimes reciting the rosary, at others composing pious canticles in honour of the Queen of Heaven. There remained but one day more of his arduous journey when he was attacked by a fever which compelled him to stop upon the road; and when at length it abated, and he again resumed his way, his bodily powers but ill corresponded with his ardent desire to reach his destination, and it was with the utmost difficulty he could drag himself along. The nearer, however, he drew to the holy place the more his soul was filled with interior consolations, and when at last he beheld from a distance the great church of Loreto he experienced the liveliest emotions of tenderness and joy. "My heart," he says, "was wounded as it were with an arrow, and all inflamed with a holy love of Mary."

On entering the town, his companions would have sent immediately for a physician, but such was his impatience to throw himself at the feet of the miraculous image that they did not venture to oppose his wishes. On his way he was accosted by a woman possessed by an evil spirit, who, though he wore no cassock nor had any other distinguishing mark about him, cried to him in Italian, "French abbé, be converted, and live as a man of God, or it will go ill with you." On entering the church, he threw himself on his knees, and, with his countenance bathed in tears, implored the Immaculate Virgin that, should he ever be in danger of falling again into sin, she would obtain for him the boon of death. At that instant he was completely cured; the fever left him, so that the physician whom his friends had summoned found his pulse so moderate and regular that he supposed he had finished his journey in a carriage; and, as the eyes of his mind were divinely enlightened, so those of his body were miraculously healed: the disorder had ceased, and never troubled him more. At the same time he received an extraordinary gift of prayer, and passed the whole night within the church in fervent supplications, with abundance of tears. Into the Holy House itself he did not dare to enter until he had cleansed his soul by a humble confession of his sins.

The supernatural graces with which he had been favoured at this holiest of shrines, wrought so complete a transformation in him that he could scarcely recognise himself as the same person. "It was in this sacred spot," he writes, "that I was born again to grace through the prayers of the most holy Virgin; that Mother of Mercy brought me forth to God in the very place wherein she had conceived Christ Jesus in her chaste womb." He returned to Rome as he had come, on foot, occupying himself by the way in adoring God for his great mercies and extolling the glories of his august Patroness.

CHAPTER II.

COMMENCEMENT OF HIS APOSTOLIC LIFE. HIS VOCATION, AND ELEVATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

LONGING to give himself entirely to God, and fearing to lose his soul should he return to the world, the Abbé Olier had thoughts of entering the monastic state in some convent of Italy. To this end he visited several Carthusian houses, and especially that in the Isle of Capri; and all he there witnessed of the angelic lives of the inmates only inflamed his heart with a more ardent desire of giving himself up to divine contemplation. Strong, however, as was his attraction to the solitary life, he was still in doubt as to what was the will of God respecting him, when an event happened which summoned him back to France. This was the death of his father, after a long and painful illness, which he had borne with the most exemplary patience, exhibiting throughout the same tender devotion to the most holy Virgin for which he had been remarkable all his life. The loss of one he so dearly loved deeply wounded the young man's sensitive and affectionate heart, and for a day and a night he never ceased giving passionate vent to his sorrow.

His mother was most urgent for him to return, and, with that mixture of piety and worldliness which is frequently to be found in imperfect souls, she was equally anxious that he should be a model of ecclesiastical virtue and at the same time aspire to the highest offices in the Church. For two of her sons she had already provided to her perfect satisfaction. The eldest, François Olier de Verneuil, had been made Maître des Requêtes, while her youngest son, Nicolas-Edouard Olier de Fontenelle, had succeeded his father as Grand Audiencier of France; and it was now the desire of her heart to see Jean-Jacques occupying the honourable position of Almoner to the King, which she had been for some time soliciting for him. That there was a large fund of worldliness in his mother's character

there, unhappily, cannot be a doubt; even her affection for her child and the estimation in which she held him seemed to vary with the hopes she entertained of his success in the world. Thus she received him on his return with the most lively demonstrations of regard, protesting that he was now her only consolation and support, and lavishing every manner of endearment upon him, so long as she thought he might second her ambitious views; but no sooner did she perceive that honours and distinctions had no longer any attraction for him than her behaviour altogether changed; for he never for an instant wavered in his resolution to withdraw entirely from the world. "Although," he says, "I made no outward demonstration, yet from the moment that God called me at Loreto my only pleasure was in communing with Him; all else was a burden and a torment to me. My longing desire and the very end of my being was to speak of God." Still he kept silence, and for nine months led a hidden life, revealing his intentions to no one except his confessor; until on Christmas Day, after making a general confession of his past life, he openly avowed his determination to belong henceforth entirely to God and to devote himself unreservedly to His service.

As though to make his rupture with the world as irrevocable as possible, he proceeded to commit an outrage on conventional proprieties such as it never overlooks or pardons. He, a young, high-bred, refined, accomplished gentleman, but lately one of its most favoured votaries, began to make himself the friend and associate of the vulgar rabble, and that openly and even, in appearance, ostentatiously, as though to defy public opinion, and set it utterly at nought. And, in truth, he seemed to be beside himself, like the great Patriarch St. Francis, when, in obedience to the divine call, he stripped himself of his clothes before his father's face, and went forth into the world an outcast and a beggar, having left all for Christ; he felt (he says) impelled by a movement of zeal which he could not have resisted without a consciousness that he was opposing the grace of God and neglecting that on which his perseverance in his vocation depended. He entered, then, on the practice of an apostleship the like of which the gay world of Paris had never witnessed. Day after day he went into its crowded streets, and, selecting the most miserable objects he could find—the more ragged and squalid the better to his taste—with a sweetness and a tenderness which nothing but divine charity could have taught him, led them in a troop to his mother's house, where he instructed them in

the truths of salvation, and distributed alms among them according to their needs. Not being a priest, nor, indeed, even in holy orders, he could but prepare them for confession, and then send them, under the charge of a trusty servant, to a young and devoted priest with whom he was united in the closest ties of friendship. This was François Renar, son of a Maître des Requêtes, who, despite a natural repugnance for hearing confessions, discharged this charitable office at the church of the Capucins du Marais, where he remained daily in his confessional from six o'clock until noon. The sick, M. Olier caused to be conveyed to the hospital, himself accompanying them. At the same time he devoted himself to the instruction of young scholars, and especially such as aspired to the ecclesiastical state, assembling them together for this purpose in his own apartments. This act of charity was even more obnoxious to his friends than the care he expended on the poor, as to their minds there was something especially derogatory in performing the part of a schoolmaster, and that towards persons who were every way his inferiors. They could no longer keep any measures with him, but gave full vent to their indignation and contempt, and at length proceeded so far as to drive his beggars and his scholars out of the house, and compel him to transfer his reception-room to a part of the premises which, as he says, reminded him of the stable of Bethlehem.

Had this, however, been all, the world at large might have ignored his eccentricities, and even have regarded them with a patronizing pity; so far, it might appear, he had had the decency to withdraw himself and the objects of his folly from the public eye, and retreat with them into the privacy of his maternal dwelling. But as yet it had formed no adequate conception of the audacity with which he was prepared to brave its wrath and set it at defiance. Soon this madcap of an Abbé, as he came to be regarded, might be seen, in open day and in the most frequented places, surrounded by a crowd of wretched people, whom he was instructing, or with whom he was conversing, or to whose tale of sorrow he was listening, with the same animated air, the same unconscious grace, the same interested attention, for which he was distinguished when, but a few short months ago, he paid his nightly *devoirs* at the court of fashion, wit, and beauty. It may readily be conceived what rage and scorn such conduct would provoke in his old acquaintances, the more as he was plainly invulnerable to all the shafts of ridicule that were launched against him. One day he was catechising a poor man at the door of

Notre Dame, when a cavalier, richly dressed, approaching the servant who accompanied M. Olier, said to him, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all around, "Tell your master he is mad!" The young Abbé heard the words, but continued his instructions with an expression on his countenance of such sweetness and humility as would have covered any generous-hearted person with confusion. Faithful to the light within him, he minded neither taunt, nor sneer, nor affronts that were still more hard to bear; his courage never quailed, his ardour never cooled, and, if ever he offered apology for his singularity, it was in some such simple words as these: "The rich and the great never want for instruction, there are plenty who are ready enough to act as their teachers; but the poor, who for the most part are far better disposed, are overlooked and abandoned, because in them vanity finds nothing on which to feed."

Scoffers, of course, there were, numerous enough; nor were there wanting those good worthy men, after their fashion, who shook their heads or smiled significantly when the young Abbé's name was mentioned, and gravely lamented, or loudly condemned, his strange misguided zeal, the mere vagary, as they esteemed it, of an ill-balanced, enthusiastic mind. But a few generous souls there were whom the example of such heroic charity roused to emulation; so that not many years elapsed before the sight of young men, well and even nobly born, teaching beggars and outcasts was no longer a novelty in the streets of Paris. Among the first was M. Renar, the young priest already mentioned; but all were not endowed, especially at the outset of their labours, with the holy shamelessness of our Abbé. One, in particular, there was who would move to a distance, or escape into a house, if he saw any of his old acquaintances approaching; but M. Olier gently reproached him for his cowardice, showing him the folly of being ashamed of caring for the poor, if we would not have the Son of God ashamed of us before His Father and the holy angels.

Mme. Olier, and his relatives generally, as we have seen, regarded the occupations in which he was engaged as a dishonour to the family, and their dislike of his proceedings was not a little aggravated by an event which now happened. His cousin, Mlle. de Bussy, a young lady on whose wealth and beauty they had reckoned for obtaining the honours and advantages of a great alliance, announced her intention of entering the convent of the Reformed Carmelite nuns; and in this intention she had the encouragement

and support of M. Olier. The opposition she encountered on the part of her friends was violent and prolonged, but it was met by a resistance no less determined, and in the end triumphant, on the part of the young Abbé. This was a crime not soon to be forgiven by his family, and their resentment showed itself in renewed insults and reproaches. M. Olier bore all with the utmost patience, believing, in his humility, that his friends were animated by a purer intention in opposing, than he himself was in pursuing, his charitable labours. When his mother treated him with more unkindness than usual, he would go to the church of Notre Dame and, throwing himself on his knees before our Lady's image, would say, in the anguish of his heart, "I take thee for my mother, most holy Virgin, for my own rejects me; O Mary, deign to be a mother to me." His devotion to the Queen of Heaven had never ceased to express itself in modes very similar to those which he had adopted when a child. If he happened to have anything that could be called beautiful or costly, it was sure to find its way to the church of Notre Dame. His cousin, on leaving the world (he says) must needs stuff his wardrobe with her diamonds and jewellery, and other cast-off vanities, but they were soon distributed among the different churches of the capital, and a large proportion was expended in the decoration of the cathedral of Notre Dame.

Desirous, and even careful, as he was to avoid annoying his relatives needlessly, M. Olier set no bounds to his fervour so far as the mortification of his own natural inclinations was concerned; and the same charity which impelled him to brave the scorn of the world for the sake of the poor and miserable, led him to the performance of acts still more extraordinary and heroic. After teaching some ragged beggar his catechism he would kneel and kiss his feet; and, were the object of his love and compassion afflicted with any noisome sore, he would beg to be allowed to kiss it also; nay, he would apply his lips to loathsome ulcers the very sight of which filled the passers-by with horror. One of his biographers, M. de Bretonvilliers, relates that on sixteen different occasions he was himself an eye-witness of this marvellous act of charity. After a visit to his favourite church of Notre Dame it was not unfrequently his custom, on going out, to kiss the feet of all the poor he found at the door or within the enclosure, as well as of all whom he met on the bridges and in the streets; for he

beheld Jesus Christ in His suffering poor, and by an impulse which he seemed unable to resist he did Him homage in their persons. "How sweet it is," he wrote, "to obey Thee, O my God, and how fully dost Thou render a hundredfold to those who profess to be Thy faithful servants! For I cannot say I am wholly Thine save that I have always striven to obey Thee from the moment of my conversion. Never could I endure to deny Thee anything when I had the means and the power, and my mind and heart have ever cleaved to Thee, young as I was in Thy divine service. St. Paul said that from the time of his vocation he condescended not to his own will, his own judgment, the inclinations of flesh and blood:* ah! would to God that this might be my case also, who am wholly proud, nay, wholly made up of pride! My sweet Jesus, such as I am it is in Thee I receive all these graces, and it is for Thee, my All, that I desire to do all, say all, and write all; Thee only I love, who referrest everything to Thy Father, for whom Thou livest."

This true servant of the Lord, however, was as humble and obedient as he was ardent and courageous, and at a word from his confessor, who suggested to him that such extraordinary acts of charity, performed so publicly, might have the effect of exciting notice, and drawing attention to himself, he instantly abandoned the practices of which we have spoken. He no longer kissed the sores of the poor with his bodily lips, but he kissed them still, he says, in spirit. "For," he adds, "our interior ought to be greater than our exterior; and what we do exteriorly ought to appear to us so little, in comparison with what we desire to do in our interior for God's great majesty, as to make us blush for shame. Thus what we do will be full of humility and charity, the two conditions which ought to accompany all our actions, and which constituted the spirit in which our Lord performed everything He did." But though he was careful to avoid any public display, yet when he was walking in the country, in places where there was no danger of incurring notoriety, he would kiss both the feet and the sores of the poor he met, never omitting to bestow an alms upon them; and he believed that these meetings were ordered by a special providence, so as to afford consolation to the sufferers as well as edification to himself. One day he met three poor persons one after another, in whom his piety recognized

* Gal. i. 15, 16.

a likeness to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. "The first," he says, "who passed was an old man, the next was a good woman, the third a young man. I questioned them as to their faith, and received satisfactory replies. The last of them, who represented to me Jesus Christ, affected me much; his body was frightfully burned, one arm shrunk and withered, and even bared to the bone. I asked him, among other things, how he met with such an accident; he told me it was through endeavouring to save his children from the flames. Nothing could have corresponded more perfectly with my imagination; the likeness between this poor man and my Saviour covered with wounds in endeavouring to save His children, moved me deeply. 'Ah! God bless you,' I answered to every word he spoke. After I had consoled him and invoked God's blessing on him, he went away much comforted, nor was I less so, for he had let me kiss his sores."

Another feature in the circumstance which pleased M. Olier was that this poor man told him he came from Notre Dame de Chartres, as he felt he had thus an opportunity of thanking our blessed Lady, in the person of this poor sufferer, for the mercies she had lately shown him at that celebrated shrine. Not long after his return from Rome God was pleased, for his greater purification, to visit him with a most grievous trial. It was his habit to confess and receive communion every day, but so sensitive was he to every little imperfection, and so scrupulous did his conscience become, that at last he confessed as many as three times in a morning, and would even summon the priest from the altar, when he was preparing to say Mass, that he might give him absolution. This was the Père Dufour, Chaplain of St. Paul's, who had been almoner to St. Francis de Sales. In vain did the good priest endeavour to remove his scruples by the suggestion of all the motives applicable to such a case; although he implicitly obeyed every direction given him by his confessor his fears remained, and only the Hand that had smitten him could give the relief he needed. He resolved once more to have recourse to the Mother of Mercy, and to seek her aid at the shrine of Notre Dame de Chartres,* which had been the resort of pious pilgrims from time

* The history of this celebrated shrine dates (strange to say) from pagan times, before the birth of Christ. Tradition says that on the height where now stands the cathedral church of Chartres, there was, in times anterior to Christianity, an altar dedicated to "the Virgin who should bear a son—*Virgini paritura*." This expectation of a Deliverer, the son of a virgin, is proved by incontestable monu-

immemorial. It was the middle of winter when he left Paris, in true pilgrim guise, on foot; but such was the ardour of his devotion, and so pleasing to his heavenly Patroness was the simplicity of his faith, that from the moment he entered the cathedral church, even before he had visited the subterranean chapel in which her image stood, he found himself delivered from all his scruples.

The reader will not need to be told that proportioned to his tenderness towards others was his severity towards himself. Very high sanctity is usually accompanied with extraordinary mortifications, and the subject of this biography was no exception to the rule. The gay young Abbé, whose life had been all softness and delicacy, who affected magnificence, not from a vulgar love of display, but because it gratified a refined and elegant taste, now dealt hardly with himself, content with the bare necessaries of life that he might have the more to bestow in alms upon the poor, and kept aloof from society that he might have more time for prayer. His austerities were practised with all the secrecy possible, but his servant discovered that he was in the habit of removing the mattress from his bed and lying on the palliasse, restoring everything to its place in the morning, in order to escape observation; and so effectually were his precautions taken, that it was some years before this practice became known to any but the confidential servant in question. In short, he was as ingenious in contriving mortifications and as indefatigable in denying himself as men of the world are studious of their ease and unwearied in the pursuit of pleasure. Nor was this love of solitude and mortification the effect of an overwrought imagination or an indiscreet zeal; he was but following the leadings of divine grace and preparing himself for the work to which God was calling him. He had a mission to perform in the order of Providence—a mission no less than that of reforming and elevating the clergy of France—and he was now being tried and fitted for the office. A vocation so extraordinary demanded extraordinary graces and a perfection of holiness corresponding thereto. This is the clue to his conduct during the interval we are now con-

ments to have widely prevailed among the nations, whether as a remnant of the primitive patriarchal faith, or by reason of a special revelation, or that it was derived from the Jews who, subsequently to Alexander's conquests, were dispersed about the world, carrying with them their Sacred Books translated into Greek. Altars with a similar import are also said to have existed in several other places; as, for example, at Nogent, Autun, Dijon, &c. In Christian times the shrine of Notre Dame de Chartres became a most frequented place of pilgrimage.

sidering, and may prepare us for all that is supernatural in the accounts that follow.

Ever since the change that had passed upon him at Loreto, M. Olier had been travailing, as it were, in the throes of a second conversion, and a few holy souls were specially called to assist at the birth. Of Marie Rousseau we have already spoken; of another M. Olier made the acquaintance when visiting his abbey of Pébrac in the year 1631. In the Mère Desgranges, Superioress of the nuns of Notre Dame de Brioude, whose venerable age and exalted virtues inspired him with a filial reverence and affection, he seemed to behold a representative of that heavenly Mother to whose love and service he was so eminently devoted; and the admonitions she gave him were received with as much docility as though they had come from the lips of the Blessed Virgin herself. In a letter he addressed to her, and which has been preserved, he begs her, in the most earnest terms, to continue still to nourish his soul with her salutary counsels, and to obtain for him a more perfect love and devotion to Jesus and Mary. "Teach me," he writes, "to love thy All, thy great God, whom I do not dare to approach, being in myself so unworthy. Speak to Him for your child, and, if you would have him follow you, teach him the way in which he ought to speak. My very dear mother, I am without voice, without speech, because I am without love. '*The Spirit of the Lord*,' who is in you, '*hath knowledge of the voice.*' * When you have obtained me His presence and His holy union, I shall not ask you how I must speak. O Jesus, Father of Love, and thou, Mary, mother of fair love, together with thy spouse, St. Joseph, obtain me this holy love. O love, which residest so fully and supremely in these three persons, give thyself to thy poor little, but alas! unfaithful and ungrateful slave. O love, shut thine eyes, O mercy, open thy bosom, look not on my crimes. Remember what you are and not what I am. Take me, guard me, consume, devour me in yourselves, and then I am content. O fire of Heaven, I cannot live if thou dost not animate me; my life is death without thee."

But the person who was directly commissioned by Heaven to intercede for the future founder of St. Sulpice, was the Mère Agnès de Jésus, Prioress of the Dominican Convent of St. Catherine at Langeac, who was, and is still to this day, held in the highest

* Wisdom, i. 7.

veneration throughout Auvergne, Velay, and the neighbouring provinces, and whom the Holy See has solemnly declared to have practised all Christian virtues in an heroic degree. This holy nun never ceased her prayers for the sanctification of the clergy and the conversion of the poor country-people, who, for want of zealous pastors, were plunged in ignorance and vice; and one day, when she was beseeching her Divine Spouse, with many tears, to close her earthly exile and admit her to His presence, our Lord said to her, "I have still need of thee for the sanctification of a soul who shall promote My glory." * Shortly afterwards, the Blessed Virgin, towards whom the Mère Agnès entertained a devotion remarkable even among saints, appeared to her, clothed with light, and said, "Pray to my Son for the Abbé of Pébrac." Pébrac was only four or five miles distant from Langeac,† but the Mère Agnès had never seen M. Olier nor even heard his name; and it was not until three years afterwards that they beheld each other, and that in the manner and under the circumstances which will be related in the next chapter. Meanwhile she offered, not only her most fervent prayers, but her extraordinary austerities, for the sanctification of the soul which had been thus commended to her charity; and such was the ardour with which she sought to satisfy the Divine justice by her sufferings for the sins of which that soul was guilty, that (as we learn from M. Olier himself) she scourged herself so cruelly that the walls of her cell were sprinkled with her blood.

At this time M. Olier had no director,‡ nor was he aware of the necessity of such a guide, in order to determine his vocation and

* *Vie de la Vénérable Mère Agnès de Jésus*, par M. de Lantages, Prêtre de St. Sulpice et Premier Supérieur de Notre Dame du Puy. P. III, C. xii. 2. A new edition of this marvellous Life, revised and enlarged by the Abbé Lucot, was published in 1863.

† M. Faillon says two leagues, but in the letter cited by him (P. I, L. v. 15) M. Olier says one league. The distance was probably about a league and a half; as, indeed, may be gathered from a passage in the Life of the Mère Agnès, to which reference will be made in chapter iii.

‡ It is hardly necessary to state that the office of a *confessor* is simply to administer the sacrament of penance; that of a *director*, to guide the soul in the ways of the spiritual life. Of course, the two may be combined in the same person; and when the ordinary confessor happens to possess the qualifications necessary for the difficult office of direction, such combination is deemed highly desirable; but in themselves they are essentially distinct. Every pious Catholic, in a matter of difficulty which concerns conscience, would consult his confessor, or any other good priest, but (whatever expressions may be used in common parlance) this does not constitute him a *director*. See F. Baker's *Sancta Sophia*, T. i. S. ii. C. ii. 3.

make progress in spiritual perfection. He was still doubtful whether it might not be God's will that he should enter some reformed religious Order, and to obtain the light he needed he ceased not to implore the aid of his heavenly Patroness. To this end he made several pilgrimages in her honour; besides repairing to Notre Dame des Vertus, Notre Dame des Anges, and other noted shrines in the neighbourhood of Paris, his devotion led him to go twice, on foot, to the famous sanctuary of Notre Dame de Liesse in the diocese of Soissons.* It was his habit thus to prepare himself for the more worthy celebration of her feasts, and one of these occasions was in the month of August, 1632—during, therefore, the exhausting heats of summer—in preparation for the festival of the Assumption. He went, accompanied by his servants, chanting litanies on the way, or composing, as was his wont, simple canticles in her praise. He wished, moreover, to recommend to her the success of a sermon he was to deliver on that day in the church of St. Paul at Paris. He was subject at this period to a feeling of nervous trepidation whenever he had to preach in public, which distressed him the more that he feared it was occasioned by a secret desire of human esteem. Many times he made an offering of himself to God that, if such were His will, he might suffer the confusion of being unable to proceed; but no such result ever followed, although the agitation remained. On the day in question, while mounting the pulpit, he was more than usually disturbed; nevertheless he began his sermon, and continued it for some time without the slightest hesitation, when he suddenly lost all presence of mind; but, confident in the assistence of his powerful Patroness, he went on giving utterance to whatever came to his lips, although he knew not what he was saying, and so it was that, without any sensible effort of memory or thought, he delivered himself of all he had prepared, and that so fluently and so powerfully, that no one but himself was aware of his embarrassment. Of this the parish register bore witness, for there it

* The origin of this sanctuary of Our Lady of Liesse, or Gladness, is attributed by tradition to three crusader knights of Laon, who, after boldly confessing the faith before their Saracen captors, were released from prison by the Sultan's daughter and miraculously transported to their own country. On the spot where they found themselves they built a church in thanksgiving for their deliverance and placed within it the image of the Blessed Virgin, which, after being roughly fashioned by their own hands, had been finished by heavenly aid. The whole story, which dates from the middle of the twelfth century, forms No. 13 of *Catholic Legends*, published among the volumes of the "Popular Library."

stood recorded that on Sunday, August 15th, 1632, being the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, M. Jean-Jacques Olier preached in the afternoon before a full audience, and *acquitted himself excellently well and learnedly.**

It was the will of God that the reform of the secular clergy of France should proceed, not from any religious Order nor directly from the Episcopate, but from a member of their own body. All the founders of seminaries and all whose special vocation it was to labour for the sanctification of the ecclesiastical state were secular priests; as, for instance, St. Vincent de Paul, Père de Condren, and Père Eudes. To a participation in this great design M. Olier was now to be called. It was in the November of 1632 that he received his first intimation of the Divine will, and that by means of a dream, although, as he says, he did not understand its full significance till six years afterwards. There was a good and holy priest who had shown much solicitude for his spiritual interests, and, when he was on his deathbed, M. Olier begged his friend to remember him when he came before God, and obtain grace for him to know his vocation. Two or three nights afterwards he saw, in a vision, Heaven opened, and beheld Pope St. Gregory the Great seated on a lofty throne and below him, on another throne, St. Ambrose; below these, again, were the seats of the priests, one of which, under the latter saint, was vacant; and still lower, and even far lower, he beheld a number of Carthusian monks, as though to complete the hierarchy. From his fifteenth year (as has been related) M. Olier had been attracted towards the Carthusian Order, but this vision seemed to tell him that it was the will of God that he should serve him in the ranks of the clergy, whom those great saints had illustrated by their virtues and elevated by their labours. The seat left vacant below St. Ambrose seemed to be reserved for one who, with a zeal akin to that of the holy prelate, should devote himself to the exaltation of the sacerdotal order and at the same time remain as much separated from the world as though he were a spiritual child of St. Bruno. This vision, which occurred on two successive nights, left a deep and lasting impression on his mind and was not without an immediate effect of a decisive character. He had no longer any desire of the monastic life, and, going the next day, as was his custom, to vespers at the house of the Carthusians, he felt within himself such

* "Il eut un bel auditoire, et *fit tres-bien et tres-doctement.*"

a repugnance to their particular vocation, that he never entertained the thought again, although he preserved the utmost respect for the monks themselves, and took great pleasure in visiting them and assisting at their offices, in order to unite himself to their prayers and endeavour to participate in their spirit.

The question of his vocation thus finally settled, M. Olier placed himself under the immediate direction of St. Vincent de Paul, whom he henceforth took as his confessor and spiritual guide. Near contact with such a spirit could not fail to kindle fresh ardour in our Abbé's breast. Instead of resuming his theological studies, his desire now was to labour for the salvation of the poor country-people, and this desire the Saint enabled him to fulfil by associating him with his Priests of the Mission,* although he was not affiliated to the Congregation. Acting under the direction of these Apostolic men, he catechised and preached with a zeal that never tired; however exhausted he might be after the arduous duties of the day, if he met a poor man on the way he would stop and speak to him of God; and this practice, it may be observed, he continued throughout his life until his paralysed condition obliged him to desist. When journeying from place to place he would turn aside from the road to converse with the peasants in the fields, regardless of the fatigue, and even privations, to which he thus exposed himself, for not unfrequently night overtook him while engaged in these labours of love, and he would be compelled to find shelter in a hovel. He had not lost his affection for beggars; for if he met with any in the streets he would take them with him to his lodging and, after ministering to their temporal wants, apply himself to the relief of their spiritual necessities, preparing them to make a general confession with a sweetness and a patience that nothing could disturb. He also provided missions and retreats out of his own private means, not only for the places from which he derived any emoluments, as Bazainville, Clisson, and Verneuil, but for several parishes in the neighbourhood of Paris.

Some months having been devoted to these missionary labours, M. Olier, in obedience to the counsels of St. Vincent de Paul, retired to the house of the Priests of the Mission in order to prepare for the reception of holy orders. To these truly spiritual men he would

* The Priests of the Mission or, as they were indifferently called, the Priests of St. Lazare, instituted by St. Vincent de Paul, were erected into a Congregation by Urban VIII. on the 12th of January, 1632.

naturally have had recourse for the purpose, but, in fact, he had no choice in the matter; for on February 21st, 1631, a mandate had been issued by the Archbishop of Paris,* at the instance of M. Augustin Potier, the zealous Bishop of Beauvais—to whom the matter had been earnestly recommended by one of the most remarkable men of the day, M. Adrien Bourdoise, of whom we shall hear more in this history—ordering every candidate to enter into a retreat of fifteen days preparatory to receiving ordination; and on the 8th of January in the following year it was further prescribed that the exercises should be provided by the Priests of the Mission. The Priory of St. Lazare had just been ceded to them by the Canons Regular of St. Victor, with permission of the Archbishop, on the express condition of their rendering this service to his diocese; a condition which was subsequently confirmed by the Sovereign Pontiff.

On the 12th of March, 1633, M. Olier received the sub-diaconate, and on the 26th of the same month the diaconate; and, finally, on the 21st of May, being the Saturday before Trinity Sunday, he was ordained priest by M. Etienne Puget, Bishop of Dardania, who was also at the time Bishop Auxiliary of Metz and subsequently became Bishop of Marseilles. But, not content with making the ordinary retreat, he desired, like other good and pious priests, to employ some considerable time in "adorning" (to adopt M. Faillon's words) "the interior sanctuary of his heart before offering for the first time the Lamb without spot." Accordingly, he spent an entire month in a course of spiritual exercises, intermitting all other occupations. On the feast of St. John the Baptist, whom he always regarded as his patron no less than St. John the Evangelist, he said his first Mass in the church of the Carmelite nuns of Notre Dame des Champs; and on the same day and in the same place Mlle. de Bussy made her religious profession, M. Olier himself preaching the sermon. Sister Magdalen of St. John Baptist—such was the name she took in religion—during the forty years she passed, first in Paris and afterwards at Limoges, was a model of sanctity to all around her, and it

* Jean-François de Gondy (uncle of the notorious Cardinal de Retz) first Archbishop of Paris, that see having been erected into an archbishopric by Gregory XV. in 1622. The suffragan sees were those of Chartres, Meaux, and Orléans; to which was subsequently added that of Blois. The character of this prelate, with its inconsistencies and weaknesses, is well and fairly described by M. Chantelauze in his interesting work entitled *St. Vincent de Paul et les Gondi*, chap. iii.

was observed that she seemed to share in an eminent degree her cousin's profound devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and his tender love of Mary.

This love and confidence in the holy Mother of God seemed to increase and intensify in his heart from the day he approached the altar. Persuaded that to her, after God, he owed everything in the order of grace, he vowed to her a perpetual servitude, desiring that all he possessed should be at her disposal. He could refuse nothing to those who pleaded in her name. If he had no money about him he would give away his handkerchief, or a book, or a medal. "They are the servants of the great Queen," he would say, "I cannot resist them." It was his delight to have some representation of her before him, whatever he was engaged in; and he never omitted to salute her image wherever he met with it; a practice which he continued as long as he lived. He always passed in preference through the streets in which such images most abounded; they were, in fact, very numerous in Paris, as the citizens, by way of a protest against Calvinistic impiety, had placed them at many of the corners, and also on the fronts of their houses. He seemed to know instinctively where they were, without being at the trouble of looking for them, and would point them out to his friends in hidden nooks and niches, in order to excite their devotion. Indeed, one of them used to call a street which led to Notre Dame the Rue de l'Abbé Olier because he loved to pass that way on account of the numerous images of our Lady which adorned it.

These friends were, for the most part, young ecclesiastics of good family, who were also under the direction of St. Vincent de Paul; and it was for their benefit and at their desire that the famous Conferences of St. Lazare were instituted, which became the source of so many blessings to France. The object was mutual edification and sanctification in the priestly life; and among the first promoters (as we learn from the Life of the Saint) * was the Abbé Olier. The inaugural meeting took place on June 25th, 1633, and the second on July 9th, when it was resolved that the Conferences should continue to be held on every Tuesday throughout the year; a resolution which received the approbation of the Archbishop. Numbering at first only a few young and zealous priests, most of whom became celebrated in after life, these weekly assemblies were ultimately

* *Saint Vincent de Paul: sa Vie, son Temps, ses Œuvres, son Influence.* Par M. l'Abbé Maynard, Chanoine Honoraire de Poitiers. Vol. ii. chap. iii..

frequented by the ablest and most devoted of the younger clergy of Paris. To the success of these *réunions*, as well as to the furtherance of the objects for which they were begun, M. Olier contributed not a little, both by introducing numbers of young men to the Conferences and by himself instituting (as will hereafter appear) similar assemblies in other localities. They were confined to the secular clergy, no member of a religious Order being admissible.

CHAPTER III.

SUPERNATURAL VISIT OF THE MÈRE AGNÈS DE JÉSUS. MISSION IN AUVERGNE. ATTEMPTED REFORM OF THE ABBEY OF PÉBRAC. DEATH OF THE MÈRE AGNÈS.

EVER since his elevation to the priesthood M. Olier had desired to evangelize the parishes which were dependent on the Abbey of Pébrac; but, before entering on his labours, he sought to imbue himself thoroughly with the truths which he was about to announce to others. For some time he had been unable to apply his mind to study, and he now resolved not to have recourse to books, but to occupy himself entirely with prayer. "Prayer," he writes, "is my great book; and a passage I once met with in St. Gregory Nazianzen has confirmed me in this conviction. Preachers, he says, ought not to venture to mount the pulpit until they have ascended the steps of contemplation; they ought to behold in God, and to derive from Him, the truths which they preach." The more he read in this divine book the more intense became his thirst for the salvation of souls; and he succeeded in getting together a band of missionaries such as has been rarely witnessed. They were all young men of good family, and among them were his cousin, M. de Perrochel, afterwards Bishop of Boulogne, and an ardent lover of poverty and of the poor; M. de Barrault, nephew of the Archbishop of Arles; and M. Renar, of whom mention was before made. The whole band was, by M. Olier's desire, placed under the direction of an experienced Priest of the Mission.

All being now arranged, he retired to St. Lazare for a ten days' preparatory retreat; during which, by the advice of St. Vincent, he preserved complete seclusion and perpetual silence, keeping apart from the rest and not even availing himself of the usual liberty of speaking in the hours of recreation. It is at such seasons

that God has been pleased to favour the souls of His election with signal supernatural graces, and it was now that there happened to M. Olier the most extraordinary event of his life. He was alone in his chamber, engaged in prayer, when he saw before him a female figure in the garb of a nun. Her countenance wore an expression of exceeding gravity and sadness. Her hands were crossed upon her breast, and in one she held a crucifix, in the other a rosary. By her side, but somewhat behind her, kneeling on one knee, appeared an angel of surpassing beauty, who with one hand bore up the folds of her mantle and in the other held a handkerchief, as though to catch the tears she shed. "I weep for thee," she said, in a tone of deep affliction, which went to M. Olier's heart and filled it with a sweet emotion. These were the only words she uttered. So majestic was her bearing, and such reverence did the angel pay her, that he believed it was the Virgin Mother who stood before him, and, though he remained seated, he cast himself in spirit at her feet. He thought that in showing him the crucifix and the rosary she meant to teach him that the cross of Christ and devotion to His holy Mother must be the means of his salvation and the rule of his life. The apparition was repeated shortly after, and it was on this second occasion that M. Olier became convinced that the figure was that of a person then actually alive, and also, from her habit, that she was a religious of the Order of St. Dominic.

His desire to go at once in search of his mysterious visitor was very strong; but, as all the preparations for the mission were finished, he was unable and, indeed, unwilling to interpose any delay. On his way, however, with his companions to the scene of their labours, his mind was on the alert to receive any intimations that might serve as a clue to further inquiry, for he was persuaded that sooner or later Providence would bring him into personal relations with the object of his search; and when, on reaching Riom, a town of Auvergne, some fifty miles from Langeac, he heard people speak of the Mère Agnès as a marvel of sanctity, and found that she was the Prioress of a Dominican house, he began to think that, perhaps, it was this holy nun who had appeared to him at St. Lazare. This conjecture took more definite shape in his mind the nearer he approached the neighbourhood of the convent and the more he learned of her sanctity; and he resolved to go and see her as soon as he could obtain the necessary leisure.

The Abbey of Pébrac was situated in the depths of a mountain gorge, near the bed of a torrent which falls into the Allier, and there, in the heart of those savage wilds, the missionaries commenced their labours, passing from village to village and from hamlet to hamlet, proclaiming the kingdom of God and calling on all wanderers to return. M. Olier preached every day, and only left the pulpit to finish in the confessional the conversions he had begun by the force and unction with which he spoke. Then would he assemble the poor people together with all the affection of a father, wait upon them himself with head uncovered, and, when their wants were satisfied, make his own meal of the scraps that remained. Those who were unable to attend the church, or had wilfully absented themselves, or had not yielded to his persuasive exhortations, he would seek out in their own homes, or wherever they were to be found, consoling, admonishing, and conquering, by sheer gentleness and sweetness, souls whom rebuke or menace would have confirmed in their impenitence. In fine, not content with having devoted his days to toil, he would often spend a considerable portion of the night in prayer. One thing this lowly priest had asked of God with earnest supplication, and God had granted his request: it was that in all his charitable labours he might pass for a person of no account, and that the credit of what he did might be given to another. It was, therefore, with a joyful satisfaction he observed that, both on the journey and at the scene of his ministrations, no one regarded him as the leader and promoter of the expedition; particularly as his whole manner and bearing were so simple and retiring, and he was continually employed in attendance on the poor and in other humble avocations. M. de Perrochel was the one to whom all looked as the principal conductor of the mission; to him, as to the chief, all deference was paid, and to him was the merit of the work referred. "He passed," says M. Olier, "for what he was and since has proved himself to be, a messenger sent from God, a veritable Apostle, yea, a living image of our Saviour Jesus Christ." If these words were applicable, as doubtless they were, to the future Bishop of Boulogne, the eulogium they convey was at least as justly due to his saintly friend.

All this time M. Olier had not forgotten his visitor at St. Lazare, and at length he took advantage of a favourable opportunity to repair to the village of Langeac, which, as has been said, was between four

and five miles distant from the Abbey of Pébrac. Meanwhile it was observed with surprise by the nuns that the Mère Agnès seemed to have a supernatural knowledge of the movements of a body of priests who were on their way to give a mission in Auvergne, and she spoke in particular of M. Olier, and of his coming to the convent, with a pleasure which was the more unaccountable as they knew she had never seen him in her life nor had the slightest personal acquaintance with him. It was with scarcely less surprise that M. Olier, on arriving at the village inn, received a visit from a lay-sister of the convent, who came to salute him in the name of the Mother Prioress. This act of courtesy naturally led to his paying a visit in return to the Priory, but, to his disappointment, the Mère Agnès did not make her appearance in the parlour. She had commissioned the Sisters, however, to present him with her rosary, as a mark of her esteem, a circumstance which they did not fail to notice and remark upon; while to M. Olier himself this gift of a rosary came as a strong presumptive proof that the donor was one and the same person with his mysterious visitor. He repaired to the convent several times, and still no Mère Agnès was visible. At last she came into the guest-room accompanied by one of the Sisters; but her veil was down, as is the custom of the Order, and she began to converse with M. Olier as with an ecclesiastic whom she knew only through the report that had reached her of his zealous labours in those parts. Desirous, however, of satisfying himself as to whether she was the actual person who had appeared to him, he begged her to lift her veil. She did so at his request, and he beheld once more before him the countenance of her who had visited him in his lonely chamber at St. Lazare. "My mother," he said, "I have seen you elsewhere." "True," she replied; "you saw me twice at Paris, where I appeared to you during your retreat at St. Lazare. I was directed by the holy Virgin to pray for your conversion, God having destined you to lay the first foundations of ecclesiastical seminaries in France."

At these words, and at the thought of the solemn mission to which he was called by God, M. Olier, in his humility, remained like one astounded; but when the Mère Agnès went on to relate how, in obedience to the Divine command, she had for three years offered up her prayers and penances in his behalf, he gave full expression to the feelings of gratitude which filled his heart, and earnestly implored her to continue by her counsels the work of sanctification she had

already begun in him. She, on her part, was equally affected; and from this moment was established that confidential intercourse between these two holy souls which conduced most powerfully to the spiritual perfection of both. Agnes availed herself of every opportunity to draw his attention to any imperfection she observed in his conduct, exhorting him particularly to the practice of humility and self-renunciation, and, above all things, of interior mortification, as being the very basis and support of the spiritual life. Her constant wish and prayer for him, as she again and again assured him, was that he might be favoured with an abundance of sufferings and crosses, and she never ceased imploring the blessing of Heaven as well on his present labours as on his future vocation. While M. Olier preached and ministered to the country people, the Mère Agnès, in the solitude of her cell, offered herself as a victim to God in his and their behalf, and for the whole people and clergy of France.

One subject there was which, even at their first interview, Agnes did not neglect to press upon him, the reform of his Abbey of Pébrac, promising that while he worked she would pray. This religious house had long presented a deplorable spectacle; all remnant of ancient discipline had disappeared, and the utter contempt of monastic rules had been attended with the introduction of every manner of disorder. M. Olier had already directed his attention to the matter, and had even put St. Vincent de Paul in communication with M. Alain de Solminihac, in the hopes that he who had begun so successfully the reform of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine in his own abbey of Chancellade, in Guyenne, would undertake a similar work at Pébrac.* But, as the Abbé was unable at that time to supply the required number of religious to fill the places of the ejected monks, the contemplated arrangement had never been concluded. During his present visit, however, M. Olier had witnessed with his own eyes such irregularities on the part of the inmates of the monastery as caused him the deepest affliction. That the evil was great he had been well aware, but the scandalous reality far exceeded anything he had previously conceived, and he did not hesitate to declare that not even the poor neglected peasantry had more need of reformation than these unworthy professors of the

* The Abbé de Chancellade commenced his reforms in the year 1622. He was nominated to the bishopric of Cahors by Louis XIII. in 1637, and died December 31st, 1659. He was a man of most austere and saintly life.

religious life. By the most touching appeals and, failing these, by the most alarming representations of their guilt in the sight of an offended God, he endeavoured to recall them to a sense of their responsibilities; but in vain. The defence they set up for themselves, and on which they relied for their justification, was that they were bound, not by the positive rules of their Order, but simply by the measure in which those rules were observed by those who received their vows; declaring that at their profession they had formally protested that they understood them and took them, not according to their literal import, but in the sense in which they were actually fulfilled by the Community at the time. To this, however, it was replied that an individual has no power to frame a rule for himself, nor a superior of an Order to dispense with its essential vows; neither has a bishop any such power. These representations, coupled with the earnest entreaties and remonstrances of M. Olier, at length so wrought upon them that two-thirds of their number—twelve out of eighteen—had begun to show a disposition to accept a reform when the Mère Agnès laid strict injunction on him to accomplish the work on which he had entered.

Accordingly, on June 1st, 1634, he wrote to the Abbé de Chancellade, beseeching him, with a sort of passionate earnestness, to undertake the reform of his monastery, and promising on his part to consent to any sacrifices which the Abbé might require. Such an appeal, couched in terms of the deepest humility, produced so powerful an effect on the mind of Alain de Solminihac that, instead of communicating with M. Olier through one of his religious, as had been suggested in the letter, he set out immediately for the Abbey of Pébrac, in order to confer with the writer in person. An arrangement was speedily effected between two men whose object was simply to promote the glory of God at the price of any labour or loss to themselves. M. Olier offered to surrender the whole revenue of the abbey, together with the abbatial residence and all the benefices attached, which were capable of supporting as many as fifty monks; at the same time he resigned his priory of Vieille-Brioude, in order to its being henceforth incorporated wirh the Abbey of Pébrac. Alain, on his own part, undertook to provide such of the present inmates as were unwilling to embrace the intended reform with adequate pensions for their lives; and, the monks agreeing to this, M. Olier proceeded without delay to put the buildings in complete repair, preparatory to delivering them up to the new occupants.

But the spirit of evil, seeing his domains invaded and his power about to be restrained, instigated one of the principal farmers of the abbey lands to oppose, and for a time to defeat, the contemplated reform. This man, who was virtually the steward of the monastery and supplied the house with provisions, fearing that his profits would be diminished by the intended changes, insisted so strongly on what he was pleased to call the injustice of the whole proceeding and the injury that would accrue to the abbey, that the monks, one and all, resolved to withdraw their consent, and neither to accept the proposed reform nor to quit a monastery where they had hitherto lived at their ease, free from control or interference of any kind. Their measures were taken with an astuteness and a dissimulation which for the time were successful. It so happened that a work having a similar object, but of a less severe character, was being urged forward at Paris by the Père Faure, Superior of the Congregation in that city, with the powerful sanction of the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, Abbé de Ste. Geneviève, who had been commissioned by the Holy See to reform the Canons Regular of St. Augustine in France. To these good and zealous men the monks of Pébrac now made a vehement appeal, and on the 1st of August presented to the Cardinal a formal protest against the act of M. Olier; declaring it to be destructive of the true interests of the abbey, and begging that it might be reformed on the model which was advocated by P. Faure and sanctioned by himself. Unhappily, they found a ready supporter in one whose constant endeavour it seems to have been to thwart the servant of God in his highest aspirations and noblest works. The representations of the refractory monks were seconded by no less a personage than Mme. Olier, who was unwilling that so valuable a piece of preferment should be lost to the family, and dreaded, moreover, lest, to induce his religious subjects to acquiesce in his projected reforms, her son should himself take the habit, as indeed he had actually proposed to do. In consequence of this determined opposition the Cardinal summoned M. Olier to Paris, for the purpose of conferring with him on the proposed changes in the abbey, and forbade him meanwhile to proceed any further in the business against the expressed wishes of the monks, or to admit any persons to profession, under pain of their vows being declared null and void. But whether P. Faure was unable to send the necessary number of religious, or that M. Olier refused his consent to what he deemed a partial, and therefore an imperfect, correction

of a scandalous abuse, so it was that the hopes he had cherished were for the present entirely frustrated, and the monks of his abbey were emboldened to persist in their irregular conduct. Without doubt, he was opposed at this time to the mitigated reform of Ste. Geneviève,* but this difference of opinion did not prevent P. Faure and his religious from entertaining the deepest respect for M. Olier, as is plain from the terms employed in the annals of the Congregation, where he is characterized as "a holy priest, whose memory is in benediction among all good men; a pastor who was animated with a zeal equal to his virtue, to maintain the honour and worship of God in all the churches which Providence had placed under his control."

Meanwhile, during all these anxious negotiations, the work of the mission had been proceeding with astonishing success. In the dioceses of Saint-Flour and Le Puy the people received the word of God with an avidity which seemed rather to increase than to diminish with time, and conversions were everywhere both numerous and striking. These spiritual conquests filled the soul of the Mère Agnès with joy and exultation; nor was she less consoled by the fidelity with which M. Olier responded to the graces which she had obtained for him by her prayers. With such courage and ardour, indeed, did he follow along the way of perfection that, at the end of the six months during which the mission lasted, he appeared to her quite another person to what he had been at the beginning, and she returned most fervent thanks to Mary, to whom, after God, she attributed the marvellous change. All the characteristic faults of a hasty and impetuous nature seemed to have been subdued and

* When the reform of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine was first contemplated, the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld had designed to separate them into several independent houses, and in the year 1630 had commissioned the Abbé de Chancellade to reform all the monasteries in the more distant provinces. But P. Faure, Superior of the Paris Congregation, judged that it would be better to have but one corporation, and succeeded in drawing over the Cardinal to his opinion; and the arrangement between M. Olier and the Abbé de Chancellade was made the occasion of obtaining his authoritative interference. Accordingly, on March 1st, 1635, the Cardinal ruled that all the monasteries of Canons Regular in France should be incorporated with that of Ste. Geneviève, and forbade other houses to receive any religious but such as were sent by the Paris Congregation; and two years afterwards he expressly ordered the houses that had accepted the stricter reform of the Abbé de Chancellade to unite with that Congregation. This led to much division and confusion, but the four monasteries reformed by the Abbé continued nevertheless to observe the rule which he had introduced.

eradicated, and he had become altogether an interior man. Perceiving this, and that he was deeply conversant with all the more intricate ways of the spiritual life, she took him henceforth for her director, and confided to him the secret trials of her soul. "Heretofore," she said, "I have regarded you as the child of my prayers and my tears; but now I look upon you as my father and my guide." He was the master-workman destined in the providence of God to put the crowning stone to the spiritual edifice: under his direction the Mère Agnès entered on higher and hitherto untrodden paths of perfection, and enjoyed a light, a peace, and a satisfaction such as she had never experienced since her entrance into religion. Thus was M. Olier enabled to render back in kind the benefits he had received through the prayers and mortifications of this holy nun, and the union which henceforth subsisted between them, and the knowledge they mutually obtained of each other, became, in the order of Providence, the means by which the sanctity of these two chosen souls was made known to the world. For it was M. Olier who, more than any other person, contributed to inspire the faithful, and especially the clergy, of France with an exalted idea of the heroic virtues and supernatural gifts of the Venerable Mère Agnès; while, on the other hand, it was the Mère Agnès who, divinely enlightened to discern the high qualities and great spiritual endowments of this young priest, foresaw and foretold the nature of the mission he was destined to fulfil and the extraordinary and complete success with which it should be accomplished.

The time, however, was near at hand when the friends who had been brought together in so wonderful a manner were to be separated, never to meet again in this life. M. Olier (as already stated) was summoned to Paris by the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, and about the same time he received a communication from Père de Condren, Superior of the Oratory, urging his immediate return, on account of an affair which very nearly concerned the glory of God. It was with a most lively feeling of grief that the Mère Agnès heard of her director's intended departure, but anything which involved the sacrifice of herself was by this true daughter of St. Dominic readily welcomed as an occasion of conforming herself more entirely to the Divine will, and she bade him go at once without delay. On taking leave of him she presented him with her crucifix, saying, "All the time you have been here I have ceased to beg of God that He would take me to Himself, but now I bid adieu both to the parlour and to

the world;" and, quitting the apartment, she went and threw herself on her knees before the Blessed Sacrament. There, in the hearing of her nuns, she thanked God and His Virgin Mother for having been permitted to accomplish the work she had been set to do, and for which her life had been prolonged on earth; then, praying with great earnestness for him who had been so long the subject of her special intercessions, she besought her Heavenly Spouse no longer to delay her departure to Him, but to admit her into the number of those who bless and adore Him for ever.

A few days after this final farewell, namely on October 12th, 1634, the Mère Agnès fell sick, and, availing herself of the short time that still remained to her, she wrote to P. de Condren, begging him to undertake the spiritual direction of M. Olier. She wrote also to M. Olier himself, announcing to him that her life was drawing to its close. The prediction was speedily verified, for on the 19th of the same month this saintly woman expired in the thirty-second year of her age. The event was revealed to M. Olier in the extraordinary manner which he has recorded in his *Mémoires*. On several occasions the Mère Agnès had commissioned her angel-guardian to conduct him along the perilous paths which he often had to traverse in the dusk of evening on his return to his lodging at Pébrac, which was distant more than four miles from the convent at Langeac, and he had been permitted to behold the tall majestic form of this heavenly guide preceding him on his way, and protecting him from the violent storms which were raging close around, so that not even a drop of rain fell upon him. At the very hour when the venerable mother expired, M. Olier was returning to Paris from his Priory at Bazainville, when he was suddenly thrown from his horse and found himself unable to rise. Believing it to be a punishment for not having addressed any words of exhortation to a poor peasant he had just passed—which, he says, he never neglected doing without a feeling of compunction—he placed himself by an effort on his knees and, with tears of anguish, besought God to pardon his infidelity. What next occurred shall be related in his own words:—

"I had remounted my horse, when lo! an angel lighted upon me from the height of heaven, with the swiftness and force of an eagle pouncing down upon its prey; his wings, which encompassed me, extending very far beyond what was needed for my protection. At the same moment I heard these words uttered by my angel-guardian, the one who had been with me ever since my baptism: 'Show due

honour to the angel who has come to thee, and who is now bestowed upon thee. He is one of the highest ever given to a creature upon earth, and I am myself filled with veneration for him.' Once before, on approaching this same spot, when I was on the mission, I had experienced certain caresses and sweet impressions of joy from the good angel of the parish, but he had not inspired me with the respect and sense of his greatness which this one did. . . . This angel who has been given me as a very special boon, for which I can never return sufficient thanks to God, is a seraph; as, indeed, appears from what the Sœur Agnès said before her death. I remember that, on passing along the streets of Paris a little while after, when they were full of people, I seemed to see the other angels pay him great reverence and homage." And again, writing in 1647, he says, "This angel is not my angel-guardian; he is the angel of my office, not of my person; his wide-spreading wings were designed to show me that he was to be the protector of many others who should be associated with me; and, in fact, the company of holy ecclesiastics whom God has given me has experienced his assistance and protecting guardianship from the first." *

Such was the legacy which, God permitting, this holy nun bequeathed to him who had been to her, in the spiritual order, both a son and a father; but it was not till some days after that he learned the real significance of the vision he had beheld. He was in the confessional at the church of St. Paul on the morning of All Saints, 1634, when the tidings of her departure reached him. Deeply affected, he went on the instant to pour out his soul's complaint to Jesus in the Tabernacle; and, believing that where Jesus is there also are His saints, he addressed himself to the venerable mother, begging her who during life had shown such sympathy for his sorrows to obtain him consolation in his affliction.

* The above extracts from M. Olier's manuscript *Mémoires* will be found in the latest edition of the Life of the Mère Agnès (P. iii. C. xii. 11, 12), having been furnished by M. Faillon, who had not embodied them in his work. The reader who is acquainted with Boudon's *Dévotion aux Neuf Chœurs des Saints Anges* will not fail to be reminded of that charming little book in the circumstance here related; which, indeed, is but an exemplification in actual fact of the doctrine of his pious treatise.

It is hardly necessary to observe that, in any visions of angels with which holy persons have been favoured, the bodies in which these blessed spirits appeared, albeit in some sort composed of matter, were no integral portion of their nature, as in the case of the human body, which is a constituent portion of the perfect man but were simply assumed for a time and for a purpose.

Then he heard in his heart, as it were, these words proceed from out the Tabernacle: "Grieve not; I have left you my angel." "Immediately," he says, "my tears were dried, and I felt no longer capable of grieving, for in my ignorance I had believed that we ought to weep and lament, were it only as a sign of the affection we bore the dead; but this is but a vain custom of the world, as if the saints were not infinitely the gainers by quitting this mortal life." Having thus consoled himself, he sought to console in his turn the bereaved religious of Langeac. "My reverend mothers," he wrote, "Jesus Christ abandoned by His Father, the Mother bereft of her Son, be your consolation and support. Yours is no common sorrow, and you may well be allowed to mourn awhile for the loss you have sustained; and yet in one thought we may all find comfort, that God Himself is the gainer by our loss. He now possesses fully and entirely a soul of which, so long as she was unconfirmed in grace, He may be said to have had but a sort of precarious tenure. O my mothers, how can we be losers in that which enriches the very majesty of God? You have lost a sister and you have gained a saint. Besides, ought you not to rejoice in the happiness of your mother? It were vain to mourn over her body, for it awaits the glory of Heaven; and vainer still to mourn over her soul, for she possesses it for evermore. To weep and lament, when the first gush of natural sorrow has had its vent, is like regretting and deploring the bliss she now enjoys; it is as if you grudged your mother her eternal repose, and would disturb even Paradise itself with your lamentations." He then bids them take heed that no relaxation of discipline creep into the convent, now that their holy superior has left them, enjoins them to wean their hearts from creatures, however holy they may be, and concludes by taking his lesson to himself in terms of the lowliest self-abjection.*

As though the more effectually to guard against the consequences he dreaded, from the death of his saintly adviser he set himself to practise with increased devotion the counsels of perfection, and especially that of holy poverty, which she had so constantly and so strongly inculcated. Hitherto, by the advice of St. Vincent de Paul, he had retained his carriage and horses, although in

* An old copy of this letter is religiously preserved by the Dominicanesses of Langeac, together with a china bowl and saucer which M. Olier used when visiting the Mère Agnès, and a silver chalice which he gave to the convent.

continuing to use them he did violence to his own feelings. "From the moment I gave myself entirely to God," he wrote, "it has been a misery and torment to me every time I got into my carriage. I cannot wear the world's livery or follow its fashions; its retinues, its lacqueys, its equipages,—everything of which it makes most account is repugnant to me, and I suffer a sort of purgatory every time I think of a troop of attendants and a servant to walk behind me." But now, by permission of his director, he sold both carriage and horses, and expended the proceeds on the poor or in supplying fresh missions for country places. He retained only one domestic, and even with that one he would have dispensed but for the express injunction of St. Vincent. This was towards the close of the year 1634.

The reader will not have forgotten the dream M. Olier had, in which he saw St. Ambrose sitting on a throne, with a place for a priest vacant below him. He had ever since felt a particular devotion for this great prelate, and had made a practice of meditating on his virtues and actions as the model he wished to have ever before his eyes in the event of his being raised to the episcopate. Now, there was a holy bishop* who had conceived so high an opinion of M. Olier's piety and zeal, that he was intending to beg the King to nominate him as his coadjutor and successor. The matter had been made the subject of prayer for many years, and at length his choice had fallen on this young ecclesiastic. This was the business on which (as already mentioned) P. de Condren had urged his immediate return to Paris; and how and why it terminated in a refusal on M. Olier's part will be seen in the next chapter.

APPARITION OF THE MÈRE AGNÈS AT ST. LAZARE.

The Mère Agnès appeared to M. Olier, not in a vision, whether of a sensible or an imaginary kind, but in actual bodily form. It was, in fact, one of those marvels of bilocation which are sometimes to be met with in the lives of saints. While the interview lasted, and for some hours longer, she lay in her cell motionless and, to all appearance, lifeless, so that M. Romeuf, the physician of the convent, believed that her spirit had fled. *Vie de la Ven. Mère Agnès*, P. iii. C. xii. 4. n.

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* Probably, as after-events show, M. Bernardin de Corneillan, Bishop of Rodez.

Besides the testimony of M. Olier himself, whose veracity is unimpeachable, there are still extant the depositions of twenty-four persons of the highest character, who declared their full and entire belief in the apparition, the particulars of which they had heard from his own lips, and who vouched for the general notoriety of the occurrence at the time. But that which invests it with authority in the minds of Catholics is that in the course of the proceedings at Rome, preparatory to the canonization of the Mère Agnès de Jésus, the apparition formed the subject of a long and searching enquiry on the part of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, at the end of which the Sub-promoter of the Faith summed up by saying that its truth was beyond dispute: *Dubitari nequaquam potest quin vera fuerit apparitio.*

The rosary which the Mère Agnès gave to M. Olier was much prized by him, and he mentions it more than once in his *Mémoires*. He gave it eventually to his penitent, Mme. de Saujeon, who bequeathed it to the Seminary of St. Sulpice. But, as she died greatly in debt, it would appear that it passed, with the rest of her effects, into the hands of her creditors; for when the noted theologian, P. Massoulié, enquired about it in 1704, ten years after Mme. de Saujeon's death, M. Leschassier, who was fourth Superior of St. Sulpice and wrote the Life of M. Olier, published by P. Giry, replied, "We have it not."

P. Massoulié himself possessed another rosary which had belonged to the Mère Agnès, and which, he says, he kept as a sacred treasure.

From the Processes in the cause of the Venerable Mère Agnès (1722) it appears that, when she visited M. Olier at St. Lazare (probably the second time), she left her crucifix on the table at which he was sitting, as a proof that he was not the victim of an illusion. M. Palade, nephew of M. Terrisse, who was Curé of Langeac and confessor to the Mère Agnès, adds, in his deposition, that M. Olier missed the crucifix before setting out on the Auvergne mission, and that it was restored to him by Agnes when he saw her in her convent. *Vie de la Ven. Mère Agnès*, P. iii. C. xii. 5. n. This was the case, no doubt, with the rosary also.

The crucifix is still in the possession of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, as we learn from a note appended by the editors to the first volume of the latest edition of M. Faillon's work. That generally accurate writer had been led by M. Garnier, author of a short biography of M. Emery, to suppose that the crucifix had been lost beyond recovery in the Great Revolution; but this was not the case.

Another crucifix which had also belonged to the Mère Agnès and which, in 1670, was given by the nuns of Langeac to M. de Bretonvilliers, M. Olier's immediate successor at St. Sulpice, is still preserved at the Seminary. It had been seen to shed blood, and, like the former, was instrumental in obtaining many miraculous favours.

In May, 1871, when the Seminary at Issy was pillaged by the Communists, these venerable relics were secretly conveyed by a faithful domestic to the Solitude, or House of Retreat, where, however, they were exposed to a second peril, for the room in which they were deposited was struck and reduced to ruins by the bomb-shells which for several days fell upon the building. Strange to say, both were afterwards found intact.

The Mère Agnès also presented M. Olier with the handkerchief which he had seen in the hand of the angel, at the time of her miraculous visit to him at St. Lazare. In the year 1718 it was still preserved in that Priory.

CHAPTER IV.

PÈRE DE CONDREN. M. OLIER TAKES HIM AS HIS DIRECTOR.

THE Père Charles de Condren, who succeeded Cardinal de Bérulle, its founder, as Superior, or General, of the French Oratory, was a man of rare sanctity and an eminent master of the spiritual life. His genius lay in forming young ecclesiastics for the duties of their sacred ministry, and no one exercised so powerful an influence in preparing the way for the reformation of the clergy of France. The veneration in which he was held by many of the greatest and holiest persons of his day was unbounded. Bossuet called him that "illustrious Father, whose very name is redolent of piety, whose memory, ever fresh and ever new, is sweet to the whole Church, like a compound of many perfumes." Cardinal de Bérulle, himself remarkable for his Apostolical virtues, and to whom numbers of zealous and saintly men—including St. Vincent de Paul, Père Eudes, and M. Bourdoise—resorted for instruction and direction, entertained so high a reverence for P. de Condren that, as he passed his room-door, he would stoop and kiss the stones on which he had trod, and was in the habit of writing down, on his knees and with head uncovered, anything he had heard from his lips. St. Vincent de Paul (as M. Olier relates) was used to speak of him in terms of admiration which almost seemed exaggerated, and, when he heard of his death, cast himself on the ground and, striking his breast, accused himself, with tears, of not having honoured so holy a man as he had deserved. St. Jane Frances de Chantal, after a few interviews she had with him, pronounced upon him an eulogium such as it would be difficult in words to surpass. "If God," she said, "gave to the Church our blessed founder (St. Francis de Sales) for the instruction of men, it seems to me that He has made Père de Condren capable of instructing angels;" and, indeed, one of his biographers, whose

work is still in manuscript, thus speaks of him: "God made him that he might form saints, and gave him the power of conducting them to the most sublime perfection. There was no way of sanctification, however extraordinary, which he did not comprehend at once, and he was acquainted with so many kinds that he believed the number of saints in our days, although more hidden, to be equal to that of the first ages of the Church." Lastly, M. Olier himself speaks thus of him: "His exterior was but the appearance, the mere husk and shell, of what he really was, being inwardly altogether another self, the very interior of Jesus Christ and His hidden life; so that it was rather Jesus Christ living in P. de Condren than P. de Condren living in himself. He was like the Host upon our altars; externally we see only the accidents or appearances of bread, but interiorly it is Jesus Christ. Thus it was with this great servant of our Lord, so singularly beloved of God. Our Lord, who dwelt within him, prepared him to preach the Gospel, to renew the primitive purity and piety of the Church; and this it is which this great man desired to do in the hearts of his disciples during his sojourn in the world, which was hidden and unknown, like the sojourn of our Lord Himself among men. . . . The sublimity of his lights was something marvellous; they went so far beyond the reach of ordinary intelligences that it was not possible to commit to writing all the truths he uttered, so holy were they, and so removed from the gross and common way of conceiving and apprehending things, for he had received them by infusion.* And, as it is laid down in theology that the light of angels is of such a nature that the lower angels cannot compass without miracle the extent of the light of the higher angels, so was it with his light in respect to other intelligences. On quitting this great man, one could only say, 'Oh, how wonderful this is; blessed are they who gather up the crumbs that fall from this heavenly table!'"

His conversational powers were of the highest order, but God seems to have withheld from him the faculty of expressing his thoughts on paper; or, if he possessed it, he was unwilling to exercise it from motives of humility and in obedience to the Divine will. When pressed by M. Olier on the subject, he replied that God

* Doctrines are said to be *infused* when they are imparted to the intelligence by the Spirit of God without the aid of study, oral instruction, or any other of the ordinary means by which a knowledge of divine truth is commonly acquired.

would recompense a hundredfold those who mortified themselves in something for his sake, and that commonly they who refrained from writing, out of love for Him, received as their reward the gift of enlightening souls, a gift far more advantageous to the Church than that of writing. Yielding, however, to the solicitations of his friends, for whose profit he was always ready to sacrifice his own inclinations, he at last consented to gratify them, and for this purpose retired with a lay-brother, who was to act as his amanuensis. Every morning for fifteen days he composed himself to dictate, having first begged light from Heaven; the brother held his pen in hand ready to commence, but, after a moment's silence, he only said, "Let us wait till to-morrow," for God seemed to close his mouth, and he could find no ability to express himself. Sometimes he would say laughingly to those who urged him to write, "Look now, the Apostles wrote a very few epistles in their lifetime, and I must have written more than a hundred."* Conversing, oral teaching, direct personal influence, this was the gift of which he was possessed in an extraordinary degree. He was known sometimes to converse with different persons for as many as fourteen hours together, and such grace accompanied his words that few left him as they had come. It was not the brilliancy, or the eloquence, or the originality of what he said which wrought such marvellous effects; the secret lay in this—that he spoke as one who lived in God and God in him; he had the unction of the Spirit. Sinners were converted, heretics were reclaimed, the tepid felt their hearts kindle with divine love, the good and the zealous were enlightened and directed in the ways of perfection.

Such was the man who now summoned our Abbé back to Paris. It was P. de Condren's vocation (as we have said) to form young ecclesiastics for their holy state, and before M. Olier went on the mission to Auvergne he and five others had regularly attended his private conferences. As most of them subsequently took an active part in the establishment of the Seminary of St. Sulpice in conjunction with M. Olier, it will be well to say a few words respecting them

* A number of his letters was collected and published after his death, to which a few additions were subsequently made. The two volumes, edited by his biographer, the Abbé Pin, and entitled *Œuvres Complètes du P. Charles de Condren* (Paris: Guyot et Roidot, 1857–8), comprise, together with some *Discours* and other writings, a treatise on *L'Idée du Sacerdoce et du Sacrifice de Jésus-Christ*, which, though not actually composed by the servant of God, contains the substance of his teaching and is pervaded by his spirit.

here. M. de Caulet, Abbé of St. Volusien de Foix,* and son of a President of the Parliament of Toulouse, was a man of a singularly detached and mortified life; he was one of P. de Condren's first disciples. M. du Ferrier, who had come to Paris solely with the hope of obtaining preferment by means of his high connections, was so deeply impressed with the piety of M. de Foix that he also was led to put himself under P. de Condren's direction. Associated with these were two brothers, named Brandon. The elder, who was a widower,† had relinquished his post of councillor of state to dedicate himself to the service of the Church; he was afterwards Bishop of Périgueux. The younger, who was called M. de Bassancourt, had also given up a high civil appointment with the intention of entering religion; though possessed of considerable property, he was remarkable for his humility and simplicity, and his manners and conversation were so engaging that he was the delight and ornament of the little society. Perhaps the ablest man of the five was M. Amelote, whom P. de Condren had chosen to instruct MM. Brandon and De Bassancourt in theology. As though he had been made acquainted with the designs of God regarding him, P. de Condren had sought him out on his arrival in Paris and paid him repeated visits, with the view of inducing the young man to come and see him in return, but for some time M. Amelote withstood all the Father's attempts to gain his confidence. So far from being drawn towards him, he felt a particular repugnance both to his person and to his counsels, and kept aloof from him as much as possible. At length, vanquished by the charm of an address which few who came within the sphere of its attractions could resist, he inquired of the holy man what he would have him to do. P. de Condren replied by prescribing him a rule of life the direct opposite of that which he had laid down for himself. Hitherto he had spent his whole time in study; he was now forbidden, for the space of a year, to do more than read two chapters of Holy Scripture every day, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New. He was to read these on his knees, without any commentary; in the one, adoring God the Father preparing the world for the coming of His Son, and in the other listening to Jesus Christ, who desires Himself to be our instructor. This rule, however, was not confined to M. Amelote, the other disciples of P. de Condren followed it equally.

* Hence called M. de Foix, from the name of his abbey. He became Bishop of Pamiers in 1645.

† He had married a niece of the Chancellor Séguier.

Enlightened by the Spirit of God, P. de Condren knew that these were the men whom He had chosen for supplying the great need of the Church. He knew that the work was to be accomplished by simple priests, if only to offer to their subjects an example of that abnegation which it would be their endeavour to inculcate; and, although he rigorously abstained from even hinting at the motive by which he was actuated, he spoke repeatedly to his disciples of an important office in the Church to which God had destined them, and for the fulfilment of which it was His will that they should not aspire to the episcopate. Accordingly, when he was requested by Cardinal de Richelieu to recommend persons whom he deemed most worthy of that dignity, he mentioned some by name but added that there were others, not less competent, whom our Lord designed for a work of great moment, and about whom therefore he must be silent; and on that Minister promising the Grand Master of Malta a bishopric for his nephew, the Abbé du Ferrier, P. du Condren said to that young ecclesiastic, "You must not think of a bishopric; it is the will of God to give you something to do which will not be less advantageous to the Church." The veneration with which he inspired his disciples forbade their asking any questions, and, in fact, it was not until eight days before he died that he began to speak openly on the subject. The reason for this reserve he himself intimated when, in a letter to M. Barthélemi de Donnadieu, the Bishop of Comminges, who wished to establish a seminary in his diocese, he said, "You will not forget that this is not a matter to be talked about. The things of God are kept in the secrecy of His Spirit; to publish them to the world is to reveal them to the devil, who is able to frustrate them by means of those who lend themselves to his malice."* No sooner, therefore, had he learned that there was a design to raise M. Olier to the episcopate than, fearing lest he should be lured away from the path which Providence had marked out for him, he wrote to him, as we have seen, to come at once to Paris.

M. Olier, although he had become one of P. de Condren's disciples, was still under St. Vincent de Paul's direction; and, whether he was ignorant of the purport of the letter which the Mère Agnès had written to P. de Condren, or that he waited for some clearer intimation of God's will before withdrawing from so revered a guide, and one to whom he owed so much, he continued to have recourse

* So also St. Vincent de Paul used frequently to say that a good work divulged before the time was half ruined.

to him during the remainder of 1634, and for a portion of the following year. And here we cannot but admire in what special and unexpected ways God deals with those whose desire is simply to do His will; great saint as he was, and most experienced and enlightened in the conduct of souls, Vincent de Paul was suffered to remain in ignorance of the designs of Providence in regard to M. Olier, so that he urged him very strongly to accept the bishopric which was offered him, and laboured assiduously to overcome his scruples. He was the more moved to adopt this course because, from the knowledge he had of the secrets of his soul, he was aware that he was in a state of extreme spiritual distress and despondency, with no heart to renew his missionary labours. This interior desolation was, indeed, of a kind which he had never before experienced, and, as he found no relief in any of the remedies prescribed by his director, he resolved to go into retreat for the purpose of imploring the Divine assistance. His fidelity had its reward; for when his abandonment seemed most complete he heard an interior voice saying to him, "P. de Condren will give thee peace," and at the same instant an indescribable calm pervaded his soul, and all its agitations ceased.

To P. de Condren, accordingly, he now betook himself, for to him, and not to St. Vincent de Paul, God had entrusted the task of perfecting the future founder of St. Sulpice for his important mission. St. Vincent resigned the charge of him, not only willingly but joyfully, into the hands of the superior of an institute to which in times past he had himself resorted for instruction and guidance; and as our Abbé ever retained the same deep veneration for his old director, so did the saint's affection and regard for the young priest remain undiminished. He still continued to press upon him the acceptance of the bishopric, made it the constant subject of his prayers, and even went on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Chartres in order to ascertain the Divine will. But M. Olier was now under obedience to P. de Condren, and the reply of that holy man was ever the same,—that he should make the matter a subject of frequent prayer, for that he saw in him great obstacles to his becoming a bishop, which our Abbé, in his humility, understood to mean that his faults and deficiencies were such as disqualified him for so weighty an office. "The Père de Condren," he said, "made me pay frequent visits to Notre Dame, in order to enable me to know the will of God, which it was necessary should be expressed with a

clearer light than is usually required, on account, as I believe, of the great faults which he observed in me. He was as enlightened as an angel, and he judged that my vocation was not sufficiently pronounced for him to disregard the impediments which he perceived in me; such as defect of judgment, of discretion in conduct, of piety, genuine zeal, science, experience,—in fine, of all those qualities which are essential to that position; as also because our Lord had blessed my labours in the missions with which He had charged me up to the present time. What leads me to think that he looked for some particular signs, either interior or exterior, for which he made me pray so much, was the great maxim by which he guided himself: to wit, that in ordinary vocations, if there were notable impediments, much heed must be paid to them—such, for example, as mine, in respect to the ordinary vocation which this prelate was setting before me by himself asking to have me for his successor—but that, on the contrary, such impediments were not to be regarded when the vocation was manifest and extraordinary, such as he would have wished to consider mine on this occasion, in order to be able to close his eyes to my faults and imperfections."

And yet there were times at which his director let fall expressions which might have shown him that he was actuated by another and a secret motive; for he would say to him, "God has other designs respecting you; they are neither so brilliant nor so honourable as the episcopate, but they are fraught with greater advantages to the Church." The more also he consulted God in prayer, the more profoundly convinced he became of his own unfitness for the episcopal office. Once, in particular, after making his morning's meditation with much aridity and a distressing inability to occupy himself with the mystery of the day, which was the feast of the Purification, it seemed to him that he ought not so much as to entertain the thought until he had arrived at a state of pure and perfect union with God, so far removed (he says) from his present "gross, unspiritual condition." A similar impression was made on his mind on another occasion, when he had retired for prayer to the church of St. Germain-des-Prés; and the same day, though he does not relate how it came about, the intention of raising him to the episcopate was for the time abandoned, and he was relieved of a business by which his mind had been greatly harassed and perplexed.

The two devotions which especially characterized the French

Oratory were the Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament* and a singular love and veneration for His Virgin Mother; and these also, as we have seen, were remarkably developed in M. Olier even from a child. P. de Condren never ceased inculcating on his disciples this admirable truth—that to be a priest was to be an unceasing adorer of the Blessed Sacrament; and such was the fervour which his exhortations enkindled in the hearts of his disciples that henceforward the one desire and object of their lives was, both by their own example and by direct precept and instruction, to spread abroad in all places a particular devotion to the August Victim who dwells continually on the altar. "I longed to be bread," writes M. Olier, "that I might be changed into Jesus Christ; I wished I were of the nature of oil that I might be always consuming before the Most Holy Sacrament; and I remember that, whenever I returned late from the country and went, as was my custom, to salute our Lord at Notre Dame, on finding the church closed, I used to console myself by looking into the interior through the chinks of the doors; and, seeing the lamps burning, I would say, 'Ah, how happy are you to be all consuming to the glory of God, and burning perpetually to serve Him as a light!'"

P. de Condren also encouraged him to continue all the little pious practices by which it had been his wont to testify his love and devotion to Mary, and thus many things which he had been in the habit of doing only as occasion served or inclination prompted now took the form of regular observances. Every Saturday he went to say Mass at Notre Dame, and he never quitted Paris, or returned to the city, without paying a visit to the same church. He made a practice also of begging the blessing

* P. de Condren instituted a society called the "Company of the Holy Sacrament," which numbered among its members ecclesiastics and laymen of every rank, from prelates and princes to merchants and shopkeepers. Its object, besides promoting increased devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, was to relieve the poor and afflicted and to aid in every charitable work. It met every Thursday, in the afternoon, when some ecclesiastic addressed to the assembled brethren a few words of exhortation, reports were made, and alms were collected, often to a very considerable amount. It contributed funds also towards founding three bishoprics in the East and furnishing the prelates with all that was necessary for their arduous mission. "These meetings," says M. du Ferrier, "presented a picture of the humility and charity of the primitive Christians." The Company, which had affiliated associations in all the great towns, was suppressed —for what reason does not appear—by Cardinal Mazarin shortly before his death.

of his august Benefactress every time he went out of his room or re-entered it, lay down on his bed or rose from it, and (as was noticed in his childhood) he always made her an offering of everything he had about him that was new. Before putting himself under the direction of P. de Condren, he had been accustomed to keep the Saturday in every week as a festival in her honour, and to abstain from doing anything he would not have done on a day of obligation; but, fearful of carrying the matter to an excess, he had not prevented those about him from pursuing their usual occupations. Now, however, with the approbation of P. de Condren, he never wished any who were in his employment to do servile work on Saturdays, and that at whatever inconvenience to himself, though, indeed, he remarks in the simplicity of his faith, "I observed that when I let them work they were sure to do some damage."

While detained at Paris, he began to resume his studies with the view of taking his doctor's degree, but, finding that his various practices of piety interfered with his reading, and having some scruples on the subject, he sought the joint advice of P. de Condren and St. Vincent, for he still regarded the latter as in some sort his director. They bade him follow the attractions of grace, and accordingly he retired from the theological course—of which, in fact, he had no need—and abandoned all idea of proceeding to the doctorate. This determination, which was also approved by M. Nicolas Le Maistre, his former master in theology, M. Olier applauded all through his life. "I escaped," he says, "what might have been an occasion of pride, and at the same time I did honour to the Cross; for when it is seen that the people profit by the discourses of an unlearned person like me, any ray of light I may have will be attributed, not to the science of the schools, but to the mercy of God."

Being now free to give full scope to the evangelical zeal with which he was devoured, he experienced an ardent desire to go as a missionary to Canada, and it needed all his personal reverence for P. de Condren and the sense he entertained of the obedience which was due to such a director, to prevent him from putting his design into execution. That holy man had other views for him and his companions. He wished them to behold with their own eyes the spiritual destitution of the people, and the urgent need there was of good and faithful pastors; and to this end his purpose

was to send them into such places as were worst provided in this respect, and especially into parishes in which some great scandal had occurred. It was his object also that they should become thoroughly versed in the duties of the ministry before proceeding to instruct others therein, and by their successful labours should have gained the general confidence of both clergy and people before laying the foundations of the seminaries which he foresaw they were to establish; and, in fact, the provinces in which M. Olier was first invited to erect his houses were those in which the missions he had conducted had made him best known: namely, Le Vivarais, Le Velay, Auvergne, Bretagne, and Picardie. Country missions, therefore, were what P. de Condren now enjoined, and, though he still maintained a strict reserve as to his ulterior designs, he would say to them from time to time, as they made report of their progress and sought his advice or correction, "We must go on with these for the present, and afterwards we shall accomplish something better." He made the same remark to each of them, but "no one," says M. du Ferrier, "ventured to ask him any question."

During the first months of 1635 M. Olier had taken part in several missions, including that of Crécy, but Auvergne, the scene of his former success, was the quarter to which his desires were all directed. He would already have resumed his labours in that province, but had been deterred by a scruple of conscience; deeming himself to have been guilty of an infidelity to grace because he had not joined the Vincentian Fathers when they went to preach in the Cévennes. However, towards the end of March, 1636, he resolved on making a preparatory retreat, under the direction of P. de Condren, in a country-house near Paris. This retreat was the occasion of his receiving interior favours such as he had never yet experienced; certain spiritual maxims were impressed upon his soul with so much force and vividness that throughout all his after-life they seemed to act like a spur to urge him on to unceasing progress in the way of perfection. He performed the exercises quite alone; his director did not give him any subjects for the four meditations he was to make every day, for an hour each, but left him entirely to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit; neither did he pay him more than a single visit during the whole time, being unable to quit his duties in the city. "This retreat," he says, "was the commencement and, as it were, the foreshadowing of all that has since befallen me. It was

now that I began to have manifest experience of the guidance of that Divine Spirit, and of the care He has taken of me ever since. I remember that I then learned, for the first time, and to my great astonishment, that Jesus Christ is really present in souls. I was glad to be enlightened on the subject of this great truth by my director. 'Yes,' he said, 'our Lord is really present in our souls: *Christum habitare per fidem in cordibus vestris.** *Per fidem*, by faith: that is, faith is the principle of His indwelling, and His Divine Spirit forms Him in us together with His virtues: *donec formetur Christus in vobis.*'† He then said, 'Since this is so, henceforth you must unite all your actions to the Son of God in one of three ways: either by affection, or by disposition, or simply by faith. If you have a sensible experience of Christ's presence, unite yourself to Him by affection. If you have no sensible experience, unite yourself to Him by disposition; that is to say, endeavour to have in you the same thoughts and dispositions as those with which He performed the same actions; and when you are ignorant of His dispositions, or are unable to form them in your soul, unite yourself to Him simply by faith; that is to say, join in spirit your actions to those of the Son of God, which you will thus offer with your own.'"

These maxims formed the basis of the perfection which M. Olier subsequently inculcated in the Seminary of St. Sulpice. P. de Condren also gave him a form of prayer which embodied the great truth he had taught him, and which M. Olier left at his death for the use of the Community. It ran thus: "*Veni, Domine Jesu* [*vivens in Maria*], *et vive in hoc servo tuo, in plenitudine virtutis tuæ, in perfectione viarum tuarum, in sanctitate Spiritus tui* [*in veritate virtutum tuarum, in communione mysteriorum tuorum*], *et dominare omni adversæ potestati, in Spiritu tuo, ad gloriam Patris. Amen*—Come, Lord Jesus [who livest in Mary], and live in this Thy servant, in the plenitude of Thy power, in the perfection of Thy ways, in the sanctity of Thy Spirit [in the truth of Thy virtues, in the communication of Thy mysteries], and by Thy Spirit overcome all hostile power, to the glory of the Father. Amen."‡ "This prayer," wrote M. Olier, "contains all the requests that can be offered to our Lord for the perfection of the soul. First, we beg Him to live in us, not only

* "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts." Eph. iii. 17.

† "Until Christ be formed in you." Gal. iv. 19.

‡ M. Olier added the words between brackets for the use of the Seminary, where it is still recited every morning and evening in almost the same words

according to His ordinary power, as He does in Christians generally, but in the plenitude of His might by the entire destruction of the old man in us and the establishment of His empire in our hearts, inculcating and maintaining His verities with force. We beg Him also to live in us in the perfection of His ways, that is to say, that He would inspire us with the most perfect sentiments of His love and fill us with the purest dispositions of His Spirit, as victims to the glory of God. This is the chief work and perfection of religion, and this was the profession which our Lord made when He came into the world, as St. Paul declares.* We add, 'Live in us in the sanctity of Thy Spirit, by which is meant that the Holy Spirit separates us from creatures and unites us to God alone: this, indeed, is the signification of the word *sanctity*. In fine, we beg Him to live in us, to rule and reign in us, by the power of His Spirit, over all hostile powers, as the flesh, the world, and the evil one.'"

At the close of his retreat he took as the subject of his meditation devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which he made in a chapel dedicated to her. His august Patroness favoured him with many consolations and, as he believed, gave evidence of her motherly protection by delivering him from imminent danger when crossing the Seine on his return to Paris. The boat was overloaded with both men and horses, and, as the wind was boisterous, M. Olier became alarmed; but, perceiving an image of our Lady attached to a house on the bank for which they were making, he said to M. de Foix, who was with him, "There is nothing to fear; the Blessed Virgin sees us;" and his alarm at once subsided. On beholding once more the towers of Notre Dame his soul was inundated with joy, and he felt again all those tender emotions of love and confidence in Mary which he had experienced when he first came within sight of the holy shrine at Loreto.

* Heb. x. 4–7.

CHAPTER V.

SECOND MISSION IN AUVERGNE.

PREPARATIONS were now made for a second mission in Auvergne, but meanwhile M. Olier gratified his zeal for souls by assisting at a retreat given by certain of the ecclesiastics who attended the Conferences of St. Lazare to the inmates of the female penitentiary, called the Hôpital de la Pitié. It was to the members of the Conferences that he also looked to supply his little band of missionaries, and to these St. Vincent de Paul added a few of his own experienced priests. The family of M. Olier were occupied at the time with the preliminaries of a marriage between his eldest brother and Marie Roger, daughter of Nicolas Roger, Chamberlain to Queen Marie de Médicis. The affair was regarded as one of great importance, and but for our Abbé it would probably never have been successfully accomplished; for, unknown to his mother and brother, he had made it a special subject of his prayers, and of those penances which they abhorred. He was pressed to stay for the nuptials, which were fixed for an early day, but the mission was now fully organised, and nothing would induce him to delay his departure even for an hour. He was present at the signing of the marriage contract, but on the very eve of its solemnisation he left Paris. His relatives, and especially his mother, who had never become reconciled to the kind of life her son had adopted, so different from that which she had contemplated for him, were supremely indignant at what their pride took as an affront, and reproached him bitterly with the degradation of going to preach to wretched country-people when he might have been a bishop. His mother's unkindness wounded him deeply; but, repairing to Notre Dame, as usual, to take leave of his heavenly Patroness, he felt himself amply consoled for the loss of earthly affection by the evidences which that tenderest of mothers was pleased to give him of her approval and love.

It was after Lent, in the month of April, 1636, that the missionary expedition set out from Paris. M. Olier performed the whole journey on horseback, a mode of travelling to which he was not accustomed; the rest were in a coach; and for the whole ten or eleven days of their journey (he says) they had neither sun nor rain, the sky remaining obscured with clouds. Their labours commenced on the Sunday within the octave of the Ascension, in the church of a priory dependent on the Abbey of Pébrac, called St. Ilpise. The peasants assembled in crowds from twenty miles round, and so great was their fervour that many did not care to take any food all through the day, and numbers passed whole nights in the church or lay down in the porch, waiting three or four days together before they were able to make their confession. It was now the month of May, and the heat was intense; not only the building itself but the churchyard also being filled with people, who blocked up the doors and clung to the windows in their eagerness to catch the words of the preacher.*

The mission was conducted by the Vincentian Father, M. Portail, who in age and experience ranked in the Community next to the Saint himself, but it was by M. Olier that the principal sermons were preached. The effects produced were truly astonishing, and to no one more than to the preacher himself. Before every sermon he knelt in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, then, rising with his soul filled, as it were, with light and all on fire with divine love, he gave vent to the flames that devoured him in burning words which kindled a corresponding fervour in the breasts of those who heard

* Such instances of fervour are by no means rare in the history of Home Missions; indeed, they are rather the rule than the exception in a Catholic population. The remarkable feature was that a devotion so extraordinary should have been manifested in districts destitute of pastors, or provided only with such as were a scandal to their flocks. The *Tablet* newspaper, of August 14th, 1858, contained an account of precisely similar scenes in the parish of Headfort, in the Archdiocese of Tuam, during the three days of Jubilee. No less than 4,100 persons received Communion, many of whom had waited patiently for the entire three days and nights. The parish being unprovided with a Catholic chapel, Mass was said in a thatched barn or shed. The Archbishop sat for two days hearing confessions, in the open air, ensconced in a corner and surrounded by a crowd of fervent penitents; while on seats, in and about the shed, twenty-five priests attended on the faithful, who knelt in humble groups, on the stones and gravel, quietly expecting their turn. On the last day of the Jubilee, the Archbishop, after administering Confirmation to about 900 persons, mounted on a table and addressed the assembled multitudes; the yard, the walls, the roofs of the houses, and every conceivable place from which there was even a chance of catching the voice of the preacher, being covered with human beings.

him. Before he went into retreat he had laboured under an apprehension that his health was unequal to missionary work, and his physicians had assured him that the weakness of his chest would always prevent his being able to do more than give a short exhortation to religious at the grate. But now he describes himself as feeling stronger after preaching than he was before, and in after-life he was able to speak of himself as one of the most robust in the whole Community. From M. Béget, one of his fellow-labourers, afterwards Dean of the cathedral church of Le Puy—we learn both the almost incredible amount of work which he was able to perform and also the great personal humility which appeared in all his actions. "In this mission of St. Ilpise," he writes, "M. Olier chose the least commodious room in the house in which we lodged; it was situated immediately under the roof and very meanly furnished. During our repasts, which we always took in common, he stood and read a chapter of the New Testament, with his head uncovered, eating nothing until we had all finished. While the rest took their recreation he would employ himself in distributing alms to the poor of the place; this was his uniform practice after dinner, his object being to dispose them favourably for the catechism, which generally followed. After reciting Vespers he went into the confessional; and it was always the poorest and most wretched who came to cast themselves into his arms, as into a secure harbour of charity."

Not content, however, with receiving all who came to him with a father's tenderness, he would go forth to seek such as were unwilling or unable to attend. He might be seen climbing the steepest hills, under a burning sun, in search of wanderers from the fold; and, had they who watched him from below followed on his footsteps, they would have found him in one of those dismal abodes, half dens, half hovels, which the peasants of those parts inhabited, and where lay some sick and destitute creature in a state of abject poverty, filth, and misery, such as it would be difficult to imagine. But nothing daunted or repelled his ardent charity. The necessities of these unhappy beings evoked his warmest sympathies, and he lavished on them all the care of a mother or a nurse; feeding them with his own hands, content himself with such scraps as they left, dressing their sores, washing their linen, in short, performing for them any office however menial and revolting, even (as it is expressly stated) to the combing of their heads. Then, having thus prepared the way to their hearts, he would return another day and instruct them in the

doctrines of salvation, of which for the most part they were ignorant. Neither did he fail to provide for their future needs, for, after the example of St. Vincent de Paul, he established at Pébrac a confraternity of charity for the relief of the sick and poor. His love of poverty, indeed, which he regarded as the livery of Jesus Christ, was visible in his own person and attire. The materials of his dress were of the simplest kind, and under his cassock he was not ashamed of wearing clothing so old and threadbare that the poorest country-people would not have cared to have it as a gift.

One office, however, there was in which he took singular delight, and for which he seemed to have a special gift; it was that of teaching little children. So far from its being to him a wearisome task, or a duty which charity alone might have led him to discharge, he appeared to enjoy it as a sort of mental recreation after the more laborious exertion of preaching and hearing confessions; while the ease and simplicity of his words and manner, the affectionateness, the gentle condescension, almost humility, with which he addressed the very youngest of his audience or drew from them responses to his questions, and the ingenuity with which he contrived to blend amusement with instruction, won the admiration of all who heard him. By daily catechisings and devotions suited to their age he prepared them for a general communion, which they made with a fervour and a recollection which drew tears from the beholders. This great act was preceded by a solemn renewal of their baptismal vows, in which he made them repeat several times, and in a louder tone, the promise to honour their father and mother in the words of the fourth commandment; after which they went through the parish in procession, with a modesty and a piety which showed how deep was the impression which his teaching had made upon them.

Nor all this time did he neglect his own sanctification; all the moments he had at his command were given to prayer. M. Valentin, a priest of Le Puy, who accompanied him throughout the mission, relates how he never failed to say his office on his knees before the Tabernacle, wherever there was a church in which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and on one occasion walked twelve miles under a burning sun in order to enjoy the privilege of offering the Holy Sacrifice. In the evening, after saying matins of the following day, he continued at prayer until he was summoned to supper, and he went (says the writer) as though he were walking to execution, being often heard to murmur with an emotion which

excited like feelings of love and compunction in the hearts of his colleagues, "*Amor meus crucifixus est*—(My Love was crucified)." Deeply convinced, moreover, that to impetrate the grace of conversion for others it was necessary to deal hardly with himself, he joined penance to prayer, and chastised his flesh by frequent disciplines and the use of a hair-shirt and a pointed girdle which he carried secretly with him. A zeal so devoted could not fail to draw down blessings on himself as well as on the objects of his charity, and it was during this mission that he began to experience those extraordinary movements of grace with which he was afterwards so habitually visited. At St. Ilpise, on Whit-Sunday, being about to retire to rest after the fatigues of the day, he felt himself moved to pray, and at the same instant he was seized with so violent a transport of divine love that, completely overpowered, he was fain to throw himself on the ground, unable to do more than utter these words: "Love, love, love, I die, I cannot bear this flame." Instead, however, of taking complacency in these heavenly favours he made them an occasion of self-humiliation, accounting them only as proofs of his own weakness and imperfection. "I was too greedy of such caresses," he says, "and God was pleased, in condescension to my infirmity, to bestow these little sweetnesses upon me, which, in truth, were not suited to me, as a mother humours a sickly child by giving it sugar because it cries for it, though in itself unwholesome."

But while he thus reproached himself with weakness, his instructions and example, and, doubtless more than all, his prayers and mortifications, were fraught with the most powerful effects; and the labours of the missionaries became in consequence so onerous that he wrote with the greatest urgency to Vincent de Paul and the clergy of the Conference for a fresh supply of priests. The actual number of missionaries who had accompanied him from Paris was not more than five or six, but, under the influence of his example, several priests of the neighbourhood had come to his assistance. There was immediate need, however, as he represented, of twice as many. He concluded his letter which is dated June 24th, 1636, with these soul-stirring words: "Blessed be God, who communicates Himself so bountifully to His creatures, and particularly to the poor! For we have remarked that it is in them that He especially dwells, and for them that He requires the aid of His servants, in order to accomplish by their ministry what He is not

wont to do alone, I mean the instruction and complete conversion of His people. O Messieurs, refuse not Jesus this aid; it is only too great an honour to labour under Him, and contribute to the salvation of souls and to the glory which will accrue to Him thereby for all eternity. You have made a happy beginning, and it was your example which first led me to quit Paris: persevere, then, in this divine work, for truly there is nothing like it on earth. O Paris, Paris, thou beguilest men who might convert whole worlds. Alas, in that great city, how many good works are rendered fruitless, how many conversions frustrated, how many holy discourses wasted, for lack of those dispositions which God gives to the simple! Here a single word is a sermon; the poor country-people of these parts have not despised the word of the prophets, as is done in cities; whence, with very little instruction, they become filled with benedictions and graces. And this is what I may be permitted to wish you in the Lord, seeing that in His love I am, Messieurs, your most humble, most obedient, and most grateful brother."

St. Vincent was about to respond to this appeal when Louis XIII. applied to him for an additional number of chaplains for the troops required for active service in Picardy, and he was therefore unable to spare any members of his Community. Under these circumstances, several of M. Olier's personal friends hastened to share his toils; among whom were M. de Perrochel, M. de Foix, and M. Meyster, the last of whom subsequently became one of the most celebrated missionaries of the time. He was a native of Ath, in the diocese of Cambrai, and had been tutor in a family of distinction, where he led a life of worldly dissipation and occupied himself solely with unprofitable studies and pursuits. One day, while endeavouring to recover a bird he had shot and which had fallen on a frozen piece of water, the ice suddenly broke under his feet, and in spite of all his struggles he was unable to extricate himself. He was in the greatest peril, when he heard a voice, as in the air, say distinctly, "You would not do as much for Me." Struck with compunction, like another Paul, he cried aloud, "Lord, I will do much more;" and, redoubling his efforts, he succeeded as by miracle in escaping a watery grave. From this moment he broke with the world, led a life of poverty and mortification, and applied himself solely to the study of the Sacred Scriptures and of the Fathers. The zeal with which he was inspired for the conversion of sinners led him, in the first instance, to attach himself to St. Vincent de

Paul, who, in the year 1634, admitted him into his Congregation; but, the Priests of the Mission not being at that time bound by any vow, two years later he withdrew from the Community and placed himself under the direction of P. de Condren. That saintly man, in writing to M. Olier at this time, expressed himself thus respecting him: "M. Meyster seems to me to be one of those men who ought to be left to the Divine guidance; the Spirit of our Lord must not be bound in him, neither must he be made to conform to the rules of others. Our part is to treat him with reverence, and to humble ourselves in the consideration that we are not worthy of the grace which God has bestowed upon him. Nevertheless, we ought to furnish him with matter for the exercise of his zeal by affording him opportunities of working." Other friends and colleagues of M. Olier, who were not directly associated with him, undertook similar labours in other parts of the country.

Writing to M. Barthélemi de Donnadieu, Bishop of Comminges, who was an intimate friend of M. Olier, P. de Condren, after speaking of the wonderful fruits which the missions were producing and were destined thereafter to produce, among both priests and people —conducted as they were in a spirit of such genuine humility and self-sacrifice—mentions that M. Amelote and M. de Bassancourt were setting out on a mission to Saintonge on foot and unattended, with staff in hand, like true Apostles of Jesus Christ, and would proceed at first on a pilgrimage to Notre Dame des Ardilliers. In fact, they laboured, as we learn, with great success at Champ-Dolent, of which M. Amelote had been for some time Prior, but had never as yet visited his benefice. Such was the school in which, as P. de Condren had designed, the men who were chosen to awaken the dormant zeal of their brethren in the ministry were disciplined and trained for the sublime mission which God intended them to fulfil in the Church of France.

But to proceed. Everywhere, as at St. Ilpise, the success of the missions surpassed all expectation. No sooner had the little band of apostles entered a district than the people flocked from all parts to hear them, regardless of heat and cold, and of the privations and even hardships which they had to undergo. Many brought provisions with them for three or four days, lodging the while in barns and outhouses, where they might be heard conversing together in the evening on what they had learned during the day. Nor was this a merely passing interest; for long after, the peasants would act the part of

missionaries in their own families; farmers and labourers would sing the mission hymns while working in the fields, and question each other on the several points of doctrine and duty in which they had been instructed; in particular, it was observed that devotion to the Blessed Virgin increased among the people, and they might be seen, with their beads in their hands, saying the rosary as they went to their daily labours or returned. Thousands who had neglected the requirements of religion and morality for years now made their peace with God; heretics were reconciled to the Church, and sacrileges of long standing repaired by a good and general confession; ill-gotten goods were restored, enemies reconciled, lawsuits amicably terminated —with which work of charity one of the missioners well fitted for the task was particularly charged—while whole families, heretofore divided by hatred and strife, were reunited in the bonds of love and amity. Such were the ordinary results of a mission, so that those pastors who cared for their flocks rivalled each other in their anxiety to obtain for their own people an advantage the value of which was manifested in the effects that were everywhere produced.

Nor was it the peasantry only who profited by the labours of these zealous men, the higher classes also responded to the call; and, though the instructions were of the simplest kind and conveyed in homely language, the grace of God so touched their hearts that none evinced a greater fervour of devotion or a deeper thankfulness for the mercies they had received; many (as we learn from M. Olier) shedding tears at the departure of the missionaries and being hardly willing to let them go. There seems to have been only one quarter in which a different spirit prevailed, namely, at Pébrac. Certain of the richer inhabitants who farmed the abbey lands at a rent considerably below their value, and were therefore as little favourable to a change in the administration of the funds of the monastery as to a reformation in their own irreligious lives, commenced a course of systematic opposition to M. Olier of a very vexatious character. They got together a rabble composed of the most lawless persons in the neighbourhood, and endeavoured by menaces and violence to prevent the lands being taken at a higher price. The better disposed were withheld from interfering by a dread of the numbers and influence of those who were opposed to them; the more so as the leader of the malcontents was a man who had rendered himself the terror of the country round by his crimes, particularly by an attempt he had made to assassinate one of his adversaries, M. de Montmorency, in his bed.

A similar fate was prepared for M. Olier, but was providentially averted. He was returning one evening, alone and badly mounted, from one of his visits of charity among the poor country-people, when he found himself suddenly confronted by two men on horseback, accompanied by another on foot, who seemed to be acting in concert with them. They were about twenty paces in advance, and as soon as they saw him they drew each a pistol from his holster and prepared to dispute his passage. It so happened, however, that at this point in the road there was a bridle-path which led to a little chapel, in front of which M. Olier had catechised a group of peasants three days before; into this he now turned, and had not proceeded far when he was joined by another priest, who, while riding in the valley below, had mistaken the glare of the pistols for the flashing of a sword and had hastened at full gallop to the spot. With a courage which seemed like an inspiration he cried to M. Olier to go boldly forward, and, putting spurs to their horses, the two rode straight up to the men, who thrust back their pistols into the holsters as they approached and allowed them to pass unmolested. To all this violence and harassing persecution M. Olier opposed only prayer and penance, a most courageous patience, and an entire submission to the Divine will; and God, who never fails those who put their trust in Him, was pleased to manifest His approval by an extraordinary grace. At the end of an alarming illness with which (as we are about to see) he was attacked after the termination of the missions, the very man of whom mention has been made as being the chief instigator of the persecution came, accompanied by his wife and daughters, to visit him as he lay on his sick-bed and to implore his forgiveness for all the sufferings he had caused him. This circumstance, which, as may be supposed, was the source of peculiar consolation to M. Olier, he interpreted as a special call to resign himself with renewed confidence into the hands of God.

But that which caused the greatest joy to a heart burning with the love of souls was the zeal with which the country-clergy, not only co-operated in the immediate work of the mission, but laboured to carry out its objects amongst their flocks and to render permanent the effects which had already been produced. It was thus that M. Olier entered on his destined office of an ecclesiastical reformer. The parish priests began to preach and to catechise with an earnestness and an assiduity which may be said to have been unprecedented in those parts; while a considerable number of cathedral canons and

priors of convents who hitherto had regarded their obligations as fulfilled in a discharge of the routine duties of their office, now deemed themselves responsible for the spiritual condition of the people among whom they lived, and especially of the inhabitants of those places which were dependencies of their church or monastery. The canons of the cathedral church of Le Puy were eminently distinguished for the activity they displayed, and at the suggestion of M. Olier weekly conferences were established, after the model of those of St. Lazare, with which the local clergy also became associated. Other chapters soon followed their example; so that in three or four neighbouring dioceses there was always a large body of ecclesiastics engaged in instructing the people, hearing confessions, visiting the prisons and the hospitals, conducting missions, preparing candidates for orders, and acting as the pioneers of the bishop in his visitations. But, so far from taking to himself the credit or the merit of these successes, the servant of God would not even regard them as the results of his preachings and exhortations. "I cannot help thinking," he said, "that this marvellous change is due to the prayers of the Sœur Agnès, that holy soul, who prayed so much to God to appease His wrath and convert the people of these parts. The Père de Condren was wont to say that very often all the fruit produced by a sermon is attributable to some poor lowly woman in the church, and that all which the preacher, who is but the channel of God's grace, has for his share is mere vanity. May God," he added, "preserve me ever from this vanity, and forgive me all I have had of it in the past!"

All the time the servant of God was labouring so zealously in these missions he was tormented with remorseful scruples of conscience, fearing that he was unfaithful to grace. Often during the day he would throw himself on his knees and, with sighs and tears, would say to God, "O my God, whose power is infinite, repair by the inexhaustible resources of Thy wisdom the loss which Thou sustainest by my infidelities; send into these regions men who will serve Thee better than I; to them I yield all the glory which Thou didst offer me, so only that Thou dost not suffer." It was during the course of these same missions and while he was undergoing these interior trials that, while saying Mass one day at Clermont, he felt moved to offer to our Lord the people of Le Velay, Le Vivarais, and Auvergne, and at the same moment it seemed to him that God charged him with the care of these provinces; and, in fact, he afterwards had the consolation of labouring there for the revival of religion and piety.

not only by the missions which he set on foot on their behalf, but also by the seminaries which he established at Viviers, Le Puy, and Clermont, and which, by giving to these heretofore forsaken provinces an uninterrupted succession of zealous pastors, perpetuated the good which he had himself in person endeavoured to accomplish.

In the autumn of 1636 M. Olier gave a retreat to the clergy of the diocese of St. Flour, as well as to the candidates for ordination, at his own Abbey of Pébrac, assisted by members of the Conferences of St. Lazare. He himself bore all the expenses of their maintenance during the time, and also supplied out of his liberality considerable sums in aid of such parishes as from their poverty stood in greatest need of assistance. The influence he exercised and the confidence he inspired may be taken as the measure of the estimation in which he was held for his sanctity, and especially for his humility and disinterestedness, of which we find the following instances recorded. While at St. Ilpise he requested his grand-vicar, a religious of his own abbey, to fetch some papers from Pébrac for which he had occasion, and, on his objecting, M. Olier rebuked him somewhat sharply; but a few hours afterwards, thinking he had spoken with needless severity, he sought out the ecclesiastic and, throwing himself at his feet, begged his forgiveness. The Bishop of St. Flour having convened an assembly to regulate the proportion of tithes to be paid by the several benefices of the diocese to the mother church, the prelate himself, as well as the assessors generally, proposed to exempt the Abbey of Pébrac, in consideration of the mode in which the Abbot expended its revenues. But M. Olier, who was present, gave expression to his disapproval of the measure in terms which inspired all who heard him with a still higher opinion of his virtues. "It is not right," he said, "to exempt abbots, who generally enjoy large revenues and do nothing, at the expense of poor curés, who work hard and have a very small income." An ecclesiastic who was charged with overlooking the accounts of the farmer-general of his abbey brought him the schedule for his inspection, together with a sum of 5,000 livres which was due to him. M. Olier put his signature to the account, without examining it, in spite of the ecclesiastic's remonstrances, and devoted the whole of the money to supplying fresh missions; and such was his liberality that during the eighteen months they lasted he expended more than 16,000 livres in the support of the missionaries and the relief of the poor. He was as forgetful of himself as he was careful for others. When he went

to Vieille-Brioude, in the neighbourhood of which were several dependencies of his abbey, it was observed that of the two beds which were in his apartment he chose the smallest and worse furnished, leaving the other to the priest who accompanied him. His only complaint was of being treated with too much condescension, and not being allowed to practise evangelical poverty; and M. Reboul, Archpriest of St. Flour, relates that in the several journeys he took with him M. Olier was so occupied with God that it was necessary to remind him of the hours for meals.

It was about this time that he made the acquaintance of Marie Tessonnière, commonly called Marie de Valence, from the town in which she lived. This poor widow, who was more than sixty years of age when M. Olier first saw her, was held in the highest esteem by the Cardinal de Bérulle, St. Vincent de Paul, and other distinguished personages of the day; and St. Francis de Sales, by a bold figure of speech, declared her to be a *living relic*. Her veneration for the servant of God and the confidence with which he inspired her were such that she laid open to him all the secrets of her soul as she had done to no one since the death of her saintly director, the Père Coton; while M. Olier, in his turn, derived great spiritual profit from his converse with her. She had a particular devotion to the adorable mystery of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, and M. Olier believed that to her he was indebted for a share in the same dominant attraction and peculiar grace. Like so many other pious persons at this time, she had felt herself especially moved to pray for the secular clergy, begging our Lord to endue them with piety, science, purity of intention, ardent zeal, and detachment—in a word, with all the Apostolical virtues—and, as though she possessed a supernatural insight into M. Olier's future vocation, she assured him that he was destined by God to do a great work for His glory. He, on his part, seemed to see in her angelical life an image of that of the Immaculate Mother of God; and, moved to compassion for her great poverty, he, with the approbation of P. de Condren, bestowed on this holy widow a pension of a hundred livres a year.

The missions were on the point of closing when M. Olier observed to one of his friends that he only needed a fortnight's illness to be assured that God had accepted their labours. The token was not long wanting. On the evening of the last day of the mission which had been given at La Motte-Canillac, a little town in Auvergne, when he was on his way back to Langeac after preaching the final sermon,

he experienced a sudden calm in his soul, together with an entire cessation from all pain, a circumstance so unusual with him that it filled him with alarm; for crosses (he says) had become his strength and support, and he felt as if God were forsaking him. But he was speedily reassured; for on entering the convent chapel he was seized with what to his friends and the physicians seemed like a mortal illness. For himself, however, he was persuaded of the contrary, for, on the instant that he felt the first stroke of the malady, he commended himself to the holy Bishop of Geneva, and, although he was fast sinking into a state of somnolency, he seemed to hear a voice within him which blessed him and assured him that his sickness was not unto death. "I shall not die," he feebly uttered, at the same time begging M. de Foix, who was with him, to fetch the Blessed Sacrament. This he was able to do, even at that early hour (for it was two o'clock in the morning), because the chaplain's room, in which M. Olier was lying, opened into the chapel, and thus he had the consolation of receiving Communion. But it was found impossible to receive his confession, as he could only make inarticulate sounds and soon lost the power both of speech and of hearing; so that all which could be done was to anoint him with the holy oils. For days he lay in a state of complete stupor, unconscious of everything that was passing around him and perfectly insensible to pain, even when the doctors bled him, or, rather, according to the barbarous method of those times, stabbed him with their lancets. While in this condition it occurred to M. de Foix to try whether the holy and beloved Names of Jesus and Mary would have any effect in rousing him from his lethargy; when no sooner had he pronounced the sacred syllables than the apparently dying man responded to the sound, though still like one who was wandering in his sleep. To aught else he was insensible, but these blessed Names (he says) could do what a thousand knives and lancets could not do; they penetrated to an interior region of the soul which the stupor of the mind and numbness of the body had left unaffected.

His mother, on hearing of his danger, hastened with her youngest son to his assistance, but did not arrive until he was convalescent; his health, however, was far from being re-established when he was afflicted with a complaint in the knee, brought on, it was supposed, by his long-continued prayers. The doctors were ready again with their lancets, but apprehensive, as he well might be, of being crippled for life, if he trusted himself in their hands, he betook him to Her

who was his constant refuge in all trials, and made a vow to Notre Dame de Bon-Secours at Tournon,* whither he had himself conveyed, all lame as he was. And now his mother beheld what must have been a new and striking spectacle to the haughty town-bred lady. On the day of M. Olier's departure from Langeac, the poor of the neighbourhood collected to the number of three or four hundred and accompanied him some distance on his way. "He has been to Paradise," they cried, "and has come back again." He was glad, he says, that she should witness this demonstration of affection, if only to put her out of conceit with a heartless world. His sister, who was greatly averse to the life he had chosen, had died at Paris during his illness, and he could not but contrast her condition with his own. In the heart of a great metropolis, and in the midst of a large circle of acquaintance, she had been suffered to expire without a friend to assist or console her, while he, who had forsaken the world and broken all the ties of family, found friends and brethren without number—clergy, religious, and the poor of Christ—as in a very desert; thus verifying that word of the Lord, that he that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, for His Name's sake, shall be recompensed a hundred-fold.†

In a few days his knee was perfectly cured, without the aid of any other remedy but that of invoking the Blessed Mother of God, and he was able to undertake a retreat of fifteen days with the Jesuit Fathers at Tournon, which he passed in complete solitude. It was then that he received the gift of a higher order of prayer than he had hitherto practised, that of interior recollection in God without exercise of the discursive faculty. He also learned a more perfect and complete dependence on the Spirit of our Lord in the direction

* Within one of the old Gothic gates of Tournon was a vault, open towards the town, in which was a painting of the Blessed Virgin, honoured under the title of Notre Dame de Bon-Secours. It was frequented as a sort of oratory by the people round, novenas were performed in it, and many cures were wrought. On the feasts of our Blessed Lady it was always gaily adorned, and from time immemorial had formed one of the stations of the procession on the Rogation Days. The ancient gate and the oratory have disappeared together, but the painting has been preserved in an adjacent house, and is every year exposed to the piety of the faithful on occasion of the Rogation procession, which still makes its halt at the accustomed spot. The Virgin Mother is represented as seated on clouds and holding the Infant Jesus on her lap. M. Faillon remarks that the people much regret the destruction of this old oratory, and that there is good reason to hope that it will be replaced by another of modern construction.

† St. Matthew xix. 29.

of his every word and act. Hitherto he had endeavoured in all simplicity to follow the movements of grace, but he had not as yet so perfectly conceived how absolutely the Spirit of Jesus ought to be the animating principle of all our words. It was at the same time shown him, as in a figure, what his vocation was to be. While making his prayer on the subject of the Holy Eucharist, he seemed to behold a man continually on his knees before the Tabernacle, while troops of priests, fully equipped for work and burning with zeal, were climbing mountains like lions and spreading devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in the wildest and most desolate regions.

After his retreat, his health being sufficiently restored, he set out, accompanied by his mother, on his return journey to Paris. On the way the carriage was upset into a deep hollow, where, but for the special interposition of Divine Providence, both coachman and horses, he says, must have been either killed or maimed. Instinctively, he exclaimed, "O Jesus, my Love! O Jesus, my Love!" and neither coachman nor horses received the slightest injury. The fame of his Apostolical labours had preceded him, and on reaching Paris his humility was shocked by the respect and consideration with which he found himself everywhere received. St. Vincent de Paul said to him, as he clasped him in his arms, "I know not how it is, but the blessing of God accompanies you wherever you go." It was now the spring of 1638, and, had he followed the promptings of his own zeal, he would have returned without delay to his beloved missions; but P. de Condren, who never lost sight of the great object he had in view, kept him at Paris with other members of the little community, giving him from time to time occupation of the kind he most desired in or near the capital.

Others, his former colleagues, he sent into the country, away from the distractions of Paris, that they might be more perfectly trained, under the direction of M. Meyster, for the work to which they were designed. Among these was M. du Ferrier, who, in his *Mémoires* (still in manuscript), describes his state of mind at the time and the beneficial effects that were produced upon him by the good example of his companions. "I was then," he writes, "to use St. James's expression '*a double-minded man*,'* or, as the Prophet says, '*a speckled bird*,'† a bird of two colours, wishing to serve God with-

* St. James i. 8. † Jeremias xii. 9.

out renouncing the world. After spending the morning in study and a few short prayers, I went to dine, by the order of my uncle, who was Grand Master of Malta, with the Abbé de St. Vincent, agent of the clergy. He kept open house, and, as he was a fine gentleman, all the great world, courtiers and prelates, were his constant guests. After dinner they amused themselves with chess, backgammon, and ninepins, all which were considered as permissible for ecclesiastics, so that they did not play at cards. Some went for a stroll, or to hear the news of the day. God put it into the heart of P. de Condren to withdraw me from Paris, away from all this frivolity, and to send me, with M. de Bassancourt and M. Amelote, to Champ-Dolent, in Saintonge, there to pass the summer and prepare for saying my first Mass. The Abbé de Séry came with us. M. Amelote, a pious and learned man, was my director, and he set me to read and meditate on the 21st chapter of Leviticus and the Epistle to the Hebrews; we lived in great quiet, dividing our time between prayer, saying office, study, and recreation. This retreat was very useful to me, and made me lament the loss of so many days which I had ill employed; it served also to make me sensible of the many miserable attachments of my heart. It was St. Mark's day when we reached Saintonge, and we spent the night at St. Jean d'Angély. They gave us for dessert some cheese and several plates of sweetmeats, there being no fruit then in season. My three friends, mortified and abstemious, contented themselves with a little cheese, while I, on the contrary, who was accustomed to gratify all my tastes, ate nothing but sweetmeats, urging them to do the same, but they touched none of them. That night, when we had lain down, through the mercy of God—obtained, doubtless, by the prayers of His three servants whom I had scandalised—my eyes were opened, and, sensible of my past gluttony, I began to have a detestation for it, and made a resolution to despise for the future whatever gratified my senses. I mention this to show the good which persons of a mortified life effect by their example."

In a mission which M. Olier and his friends undertook at this time in the environs of Paris, they had to pass through St. Germain's, where the King and his court were then staying, and M. Olier, whom all the world regarded as on the way to a bishopric, proposed that, to put in practice that love of evangelical poverty which they possessed, they should go in one of the common cars of the country, instead of in a coach, as they had hitherto done. It was represented

to him that, as some of the ecclesiastics had acquaintances among the courtiers, such a style of equipage would only excite ridicule and draw down contempt both on themselves and on the object in which they were engaged. But the servant of God replied, "Our Lord, when He rode into Jerusalem on an ass, showed us what account we ought to make of the world's opinion; nay, was not He who is Wisdom and Sanctity Itself mocked and derided? Were not the Apostles laughed to scorn when they announced the Gospel? No, no; let us not stand haggling, but go forward." So they went, as he wished, in an open car, and God accepted the humiliation and blessed their labours with extraordinary success.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NUNS OF LA RÉGRIPPIÈRE. PÈRE BERNARD. M. QUÉRIOLET. M. BOURDOISE. MISSIONS IN BRITTANY, PICARDY, ETC.

ON his return to Paris M. Olier prepared himself for a fresh campaign by a spiritual retreat. Two missions were proposed to him, and, his director being away, he resolved, after consulting God in prayer, to go into Brittany. He repaired accordingly to his priory of Clisson, intending to join M. Meyster in Saintonge, where the latter was engaged in giving missions, but a severe cold obliged him to defer the journey. To spend the time with greater profit to his soul, he went through all the exercises of a retreat, visiting frequently the chapel of Notre Dame de Toute-Joie,* a place of pilgrimage in the close vicinity of the monastery, where he did not fail to receive many consolations at the hands of his heavenly Patroness. He took occasion, also, to hold frequent conferences with the clergy of those parts.

While thus recruiting himself, he learned that at the village of La

* This chapel was originally erected by Oliver de Clisson, father of the Constable, in thanksgiving for some happy news he had received on the spot. It became a frequented place of pilgrimage; thirteen or fourteen parishes going to it in procession at different times of the year. During the war in La Vendée it was delivered to the flames, but, though only the walls remained standing, it was not altogether disused as a place of prayer, and a young girl of the neighbourhood undertook to collect alms for its reconstruction. For several years she might be seen sitting among the ruins and holding out her hand to the passers-by, especially on fair and market days; she employed herself meanwhile in spinning, giving utterance to her complaints in a mournful song. Many laughed at her, some insulted her, few gave her anything, but she continued spinning and singing, neither abashed nor disheartened. At length, when peace was restored, she took a little image of the Blessed Virgin in her hand, and went about the country begging for the chapel. Some gave her money, others promised timber for the building; after a while, some of the better sort contributed more largely, and the chapel was restored. At the present day it is still a place of much resort to the faithful.

Régrippière, distant six miles from Clisson, there was a priory of nuns of the Order of Fontevrault,* who, through their worldliness, frivolity, and contentiousness, had become the scandal of the neighbourhood. The relaxation of all the bonds of discipline, entailing, as it did, the total loss of the interior spirit of religion, had brought a host of all the usual abuses in its train. Yielding to an impulse of zeal, M. Olier, now sufficiently recovered, repaired to the convent and, without disclosing his name, begged the hospitality of the house for himself and an ecclesiastic who accompanied him. It was the 20th of July, 1638. An intermittent fever, which had assumed the character of an epidemic, prevailed at that time in the district, and the nuns, supposing them to be persons who were seeking a refuge from its attacks, and apprehensive themselves of taking the disorder, refused them admission. The man of God made no complaint but, retiring quietly from the gate, went and took up his quarters in a dilapidated hen-house which he had observed on his approach to the convent. The servants, out of respect for the habit he wore, did not venture to disturb him, and there accordingly he remained, abiding God's time. The humility which he had shown under the rebuff he had received, the modesty and charity which appeared in all his words and demeanour, and his continual application to prayer, were not lost upon those who were without the walls, and the favourable

* The order of Fontevrault was instituted by B. Robert d'Arbrisselles. Besides the Abbey of De la Roe, or De Rota, for Canons Regular of St. Augustine, he founded for women, in 1099, the great monastery of Fontevrault (*Fons Ebraldi*) in Poitou, under the rule of St. Benedict. The number of religious increased so rapidly that he soon had to erect other houses. Among them was one for young women and widows, another for the leprous and diseased, and a third for fallen women who, on their conversion, desired to consecrate themselves to God. The chief peculiarity of the institute was that, in honour of the Blessed Virgin, to whom on the Cross her Divine Son had given authority over St. John, the monks were, equally with the nuns, put under obedience to the mother abbess, who was also the general of the Order, a regulation approved by the Pope. The houses for women were at a distance from those of the men. The rule of St. Benedict was observed in all its strictness; the law of enclosure being so rigorously enforced that no priest was permitted even to enter the infirmary in order to visit the sick, who, in their very agony, were carried into the church, there to receive the last sacraments. Before the Revolution there were some sixty houses, or priories, in France, divided into four provinces, and there were two in England previously to the schism.

Dr. Lingard shows that it was not uncommon among the northern nations to have both monks and nuns governed by one and the same superior, either abbot or abbess. *History and Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church.* Vol. I. pp. 193–198.

opinion they entertained of the priestly stranger was speedily communicated to the inmates of the house. It was not long, therefore, before a message arrived from the nuns, inviting him to take up his abode in the rooms allotted to guests. But M. Olier simply and modestly replied that he begged the ladies would not trouble themselves further about his accommodation, for that his little lodging was everything he could wish.

The report of the unknown priest who had established himself in the nuns' hen-house, and would not move out, was soon noised abroad, and one of the magistrates of a neighbouring town was curious to see the intruder. Now, it so happened that the magistrate in question was an intimate friend of the Olier family, and he no sooner beheld our Abbé in his strange retreat than he hastened to inform the nuns who and what manner of man it was they had shut their doors upon. If before they had been anxious to retrieve their error, it now appeared as if they could not reproach themselves sufficiently for their want of respect to so great a personage, and they entreated him to do their house the honour of occupying the most commodious apartment it afforded. But this priest of the Most High knew well on what errand he had come; he had come to do a work for God, and he would do it in the way God willed. Thanking, therefore, with all courtesy those who had conveyed to him the flattering message, he answered, in language to which their ears were but little accustomed, "Jesus, my Master, was pleased to be born in a stable, and to lie long time in a manger; it would not be fitting, therefore, that I should be in a hurry to quit a place in which I fare so well." Disconcerted, as well as surprised, at a refusal so unexpected, the nuns desired at least that the fowls should be removed from the miserable lodging he had chosen. "No," replied he, with a pleasant smile, "these poor birds have done nothing for which they should be driven out; and, if the crowing of a cock could convert the Prince of the Apostles, I do not despair but that God may make use of the same means to bring about at last my own conversion."

And now a strange feeling began to steal over the inmates of this unhappy house, a mixture of curiosity and fear, with a slight addition of compunction. What was this man come for? Why had he set himself down as if to watch and wait for something that was going to happen to them? What had he to say to them? Had he come to convert them? But they would not be converted—at least not yet.

The vainest nun in the house, the gayest, proudest bird among them all (as M. Olier describes her), young, handsome, and clever, who was for ever receiving visits from her acquaintances among the admiring *noblesse*, was seized with a desire to go and talk with him; but, unwilling to forsake her pleasures, she thought to arm herself beforehand by making a bargain with God that she should have three years' reprieve before she was converted. To reach M. Olier she had to go by the convent chapel, and, as she passed, a voice seemed to speak to her heart, and to say to her that her hour was come. When she saw the holy man, she thought she beheld the saintly Bishop of Geneva, and, deeply moved, resolved at once to change her life. Hastening to the Superioress, she said, "Mother, my apostle is come; I must surrender; I can delay no longer." A conversion so unlooked-for and surprising caused a general sensation, and M. Olier was asked to preach on the following day. He consented; and such grace accompanied his words that, not only the Sœur de Vauldray, the religious in question, but several others determined to make a retreat of ten days, accompanied with a general confession, a proceeding of which they had previously had not the slightest intention. The lesson he had learned in his recent retreat was still uppermost in M. Olier's thoughts, and several times during his discourse he repeated the expression, "*Plaire à Dieu*—to please God." The words made a strange impression on his hearers, haunting their memory like some sweet and solemn tune, so that, instead of the snatches of songs and scraps of worldly gossip which it was usual to hear the nuns repeating up and down the house, they went about saying, "*Plaire à Dieu, Plaire à Dieu.*" Of forty nuns, fourteen were united in a firm determination to live henceforth as true religious. It was St. Mary Magdalen's day, and on the morrow they commenced their retreat, which terminated accordingly on the 1st of August, dedicated to St. Peter *ad vincula;* a coincidence from which M. Olier, who had a particular devotion to those two great patrons and models of penitent souls, did not fail to draw the happiest auguries. He had no difficulty in bringing back these fourteen religious to the observance of community life, which had been virtually abolished in the house, and in banishing from their breasts the spirit of appropriation (*propriété*), that fatal source of dissipation and often even of disorder in a convent.*

* It is not easy to render the term *propriété* by any corresponding English word. It signifies that which is the very opposite of the spirit of community life, viz.,

Before M. Olier could complete the reform he had begun at La Régrippière, he was obliged to leave for Nantes, proposing to go thence (as has been said) to the assistance of M. Meyster in Saintonge, and afterwards to return to Paris. But his presence being still needed for the confirmation and guidance of the religious who had yielded to grace, God allowed him to be attacked by the epidemic already mentioned, which detained him in Brittany until the beginning of the following year. He was taken ill on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, a circumstance which he regarded as a special token of her favour; "a recompense," he writes, "for my small labours the most precious a Christian can receive." From a spirit of devotion to that heavenly Mother, he always reckoned the years of his own life from her birthday, and her Divine Son (he says) never failed on that day to bestow some blessing upon him. His intention had been to remain at his Priory of Clisson, to which he had retired from Nantes, until his health was fully re-established, but he was so strongly urged to return to the latter place by Marie-Constance de Bressand, Mother Assistant of the Convent of the Visitation, that he complied with her request. The only accommodation the good nun could offer him was a room in the gardener's cottage; but this, she well knew, would be exactly to his taste, especially as it resembled the lodging which St. Francis de Sales had occupied at Lyons during his last illness. Indeed it was all for the sake of this great prelate that he accepted the invitation. The Mère de Bressand, before entering religion, had enjoyed the happiness of being under the saint's direction, and M. Olier hoped to derive much edification from her reminiscences of his habits and conversation, particularly in all that concerned the spiritual life. Nor was he disappointed in his expectations; while she, on her part, seemed to perceive in him so large a measure of the lights and graces of her saintly director that she was moved to take him as the guide of her soul.

It was at this time also that he was brought into spiritual relations with another very holy woman, the Sœur Marie Boufard, who was then living in the world in a state of great poverty and confirmed ill health, but who subsequently, through his assistance, entered the Convent of the Visitation as a lay-sister and died, in the odour of sanctity, at the advanced age of eighty-seven years. She supported

when religious, instead of possessing all things in common, love to appropriate something to themselves, whether for use or in possession.

herself by keeping a school, and such was the reputation in which she was held that people came from all parts to consult her on affairs of importance. Like M. Olier, she had a profound devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament and a tender love for the Blessed Virgin, and, as God led her by extraordinary ways and lavished extraordinary favours upon her, the fear of being deluded caused her to accept with particular joy the guidance of one who was competent to direct her with safety along those heights of perfection to which she was called.

While he was at Nantes, M. Olier received the tidings that a son had been born (September 5th, 1638) to Louis XIII. and Anne of Austria, and consequently an heir to the throne of France. A matter of so much importance had been made the constant subject of his supplications to Heaven, and his joy and thankfulness were proportionately great. In this behalf he had offered to God, not his prayers only, but his penances also; in reference to which M. Faillon relates a little incident which is not without its value. M. Picoté—of whom more will be said hereafter—was passing one day through the court of the Louvre, on his return from visiting the Queen Mother, who held him in high esteem, when the boy-king perceived him and begged to be remembered in his prayers. "Sire," replied the simple-hearted priest—as though to assure Louis that his request had been a superfluous one—"you have cost me, and M. Olier too, many a good scourging." M. Olier's solicitude for the interests of religion—it may here be observed—made him so anxious that the future monarch should be educated in a truly Christian manner that he would not have shrunk from the responsibility of acting himself as the young Dauphin's preceptor; and, as it appears, he even expressed a willingness to undertake the onerous office.

But to return. During his stay at Nantes M. Olier became the witness of a miraculous circumstance, and one that from its nature would affect him very powerfully. There was in the Convent of the Visitation a nun named Françoise-Madeleine de la Roussière, who was consumed with an insatiable hunger for the Divine Eucharist. On the evenings before receiving Communion she might be observed all sighing and panting for the Bread of Life, which to her was the very meat and drink of her soul; her countenance was in a flame, and the perspiration stood in drops upon her forehead, even in the depth of winter. One day, when M. Olier was saying Mass as usual, and was about to communicate this Sister, the Sacred Host detached Itself from his fingers, and went of Its own accord into her mouth,

as though hastening to satisfy the longing desire of so ardent a soul. The parish priest of Nort likewise beheld the same extraordinary manifestation of the Divine favour to this holy nun.

M. Olier profited by the delay to follow up the work so auspiciously begun at La Régrippière. He visited the convent on several occasions, and addressed the religious in letters which were scarcely less effectual than his presence and oral exhortations. The Sœur de Vauldray remained stedfast in her good resolutions, and showed a most admirable courage amidst all the discouragements and sufferings she had now to endure from those who maintained their spirit of independence and refused to submit to the yoke of discipline. But a reform such as alone would satisfy the zeal of God's servant was not to be brought about in a few days or even months: how he succeeded in the end we shall see hereafter; but meanwhile the state of this religious house was a matter of deep anxiety to him and the subject of his constant prayers. It was to the Sœur de Vauldray that he looked as the instrument, under God, by which the change was to be effected, and, with P. de Condren's permission, he continued to correspond with her in the capacity of her director, even after his return to Paris. Providence also assisted him in an unlooked-for way. In the beginning of January, 1639, he felt himself sufficiently recovered to leave Nantes, but he was unequal to a journey on horse-back—which, as he had sold his carriage, was now his only means of travelling—especially in the middle of winter. In this perplexity, he betook himself to his usual resource of prayer, when a gentleman of the country, who was aware of his embarrassment, offered him a seat in his coach and six, only begging to be allowed to go a little out of the way to visit an abbey with the Superioress of which he wished to confer. This was no other than the Abbey of Fontevrault, the mother-house of the convent at La Régrippière. M. Olier had thus an opportunity of preferring a petition for the success of which nothing less than a personal application would have sufficed. He knew that in the neighbourhood of Fontevrault there was a nun, pious and prudent, and every way qualified, on whose co-operation he could rely for completing the reform which he had so much at heart. This nun he now begged the Abbess * to send to La Régrippière.

* Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon, natural daughter of Henri IV. From her childhood she was remarkable for piety, and on becoming abbess of Fontevrault she manifested all the virtues of a perfect religious. Such was her love of poverty and mortification that she shrank from no employment however menial; washing

It was not without some trouble that he obtained his request, but the result amply proved both the justice of his representations and the wisdom of yielding to them.

On reaching Paris, M. Olier hastened to confer with P. de Condren, whom he had not seen for six months; and it was with an inexpressible satisfaction that he found his method of prayer, and his mode of disposing himself thereto, approved by so gifted a master of the spiritual life. Under this Father's direction, he now resumed his theological and scriptural studies, but his attraction to prayer was so strong that he asked and obtained permission to make a second hour's meditation in the evening, except on certain days, when, for the sake of study, it was not to be prolonged beyond half-an-hour; but by the mercy of God (he says) he never omitted the full hour's meditation in the morning, however he might be employed.

The course of this history now introduces us to three men, perhaps the most remarkable of their time, at least for what may be called their holy eccentricities. The first is Claude Bernard, converted by the Bishop of Belley, who distributed all he possessed among the poor, and was himself commonly called "the Poor Priest." He was a person of original genius but of great singularity of character, and one who seems to have been sent into the world for the purpose of condemning and confounding its maxims and notions by what to many would appear to be an indiscreet display of the folly of the religion of the Cross. His delight seemed to be to defy the opinion of the world and to affront it in every way which his zeal could prompt or his wit devise. Human respect, human prudence, worldly propriety, what men called wisdom, he absolutely scorned, and he gave expression to his scorn in a way which, in its turn, excited the world's contempt; so that, while his friends, and all who were acquainted with his real character, knew him to be a man of great intellectual acuteness, thorough earnestness of purpose, and a most saintly life, to people in general, who knew only just so much of him as he was pleased to let them see, he looked more like a buffoon or a madman. Between this good but eccentric man and M. Olier there sprang up a peculiar friendship, based on the know-

the dishes, sweeping the cloisters and the kitchen, waiting on the sick night and day, and assisting the dying. Her accomplishments were no less remarkable. Her ordinary reading consisted of one of the Latin Fathers, and she composed several treatises of theology and philosophy. She died on the 16th of January, 1670, at the age of sixty-two, having been abbess thirty-three years.

ledge of each other's estimable qualities, and especially on their common zeal for the honour of God, their tender devotion to Mary, and their love of the poor.

The second is Pierre de Quériolet, who, while leading a life of habitual impiety, had been converted in the manner about to be related. He came at this time to Paris to see P. Bernard, out of respect for his sanctity, and it was from his own lips that M. Olier learned the following particulars,* in the presence of St. Vincent de Paul, P. de Condren, and the other ecclesiastics with whom the reader has been made acquainted. "You will agree," he said, "in regarding me as an example of the extraordinary mercy of God when you have heard the narrative of my horrible crimes. Up to the age of thirty-five I passed my life in the practice of every kind of abomination, and in the habitual profanation of the sacraments, which I received that I might have the appearance of being a good Catholic. At last I was possessed with so unaccountable a hatred for the Person of Jesus Christ that I left the kingdom in order to go to Constantinople and turn Mahometan. I had ascertained that an envoy from the Grand Turk was at Vienna, and I made haste that I might be in time to accompany him on his return; but the infinite mercy of God determined otherwise. While passing by night through a forest in Germany I fell into the hands of robbers, who killed my two attendants. Seeing their guns levelled at me, I made a vow to visit the shrine of Notre Dame de Liesse, if God would deliver me from this peril. I was delivered; but, alas! I did not the less persist in my impious intention, and hurried to Vienna for the purpose of joining the envoy; but he had taken his departure. In the hope of overtaking him, for he had left only the day before, I took boat on the Danube, and reached the confines of Hungary, where I was stopped for want of a passport. I then repaired to Venice, waiting an opportunity to embark for Constantinople, and with this view I enlisted as a soldier of the Republic in the garrison of the place from which the vessels sailed. For six weeks it pleased God that no vessel left for Constantinople, and, being tired of the life I was leading, I deserted, regardless of the peril I was incurring, and returned to France. At Paris I heard of the death of my father, hastened by his distress at my unhappy determination, of which he was aware. I then turned Protestant, thinking it more for my

* They were taken down by M. du Ferrier at the time, and are to be found in his (unpublished) *Mémoires.*

interests; but, as I was destitute of all religion, on my family offering me what appeared greater advantages I again professed myself a Catholic. I resumed my practice of making sacrilegious communions, accompanied with the most frightful profligacy. Though I did not drink to intoxication, yet the quantity of wine in which I indulged kept me in such a state of excitement that I was always engaged in some quarrel. I seemed to have an insatiable thirst for human blood, and killed several persons in encounters and duels. As a protection to myself, I purchased the situation of councillor to the Parliament of Rennes, although I had no knowledge of law.

"In the midst of these detestable enormities God twice preserved me from death, but I only became more impious and violent than before. Thus, on one occasion, after I had been vomiting forth most horrible blasphemies against God, the chamber in which I lay was struck with lightning, which tore away the roof of the house, the ceiling of the room, and even the top of the bed, leaving me exposed to a storm of rain; but I only commenced blaspheming anew, defying the lightning and Him who sent it. A feeling of remorse, however, followed; I had thoughts of changing my life, and went and begged the Carthusians to receive me into their Order; but on the third day I took my departure without a word of farewell. From that time I became an absolute atheist, believing neither in God nor in devils, neither in Heaven nor in Hell."

It was the time at which the diabolical possessions at the Ursuline Convent of Loudun * were agitating all France, and, being on his way to the town, Quériolet thought he would go and witness the exorcisms, which to him, denying as he did the existence of devils, were a mere piece of jugglery, and he went (he says) as he might to a comedy, from no other motive than the desire of amusement. The exorcism had nearly terminated when one of the possessed, turning towards him, or, rather, the demon who spoke by her mouth, began giving vent to the most horrible blasphemies against God, accusing Him of injustice, in that He had condemned so many millions of angels for one only sin and yet showed mercy to the most wicked of men, who had committed the most dreadful crimes without number; having delivered out of his hands that wretched blasphemer and atheist, who had made a vow to Our Lady of Liesse which he never performed, and was altogether undeserving of that

* A full account of these diabolical possessions is given in the work of P. Surin entitled, *Triomphe de l'Amour Divin sur les Puissances de l'Enfer.*

Virgin's pity. This reproachful mention of his vow, of which he had never breathed a syllable to mortal being, fell upon his soul with a force more startling than that of the thunderbolt which had awakened a passing feeling of compunction within him, and, rushing from the place, he sought a neighbouring chapel and there, with his face to the earth, gave free course to his sorrow. Those who saw him thought he had been seized with sudden illness and would have raised him from the ground, but his countenance, all bathed in tears, showed the nature of his emotions, and he was left alone. All that night he lay on the floor of his chamber, bewailing his sins, and on the morrow he made a general confession of his whole life. The first act of his new existence was to repair to Liesse in fulfilment of his vow; he dismissed his servants, gave all he had about him to the poor, put on a beggar's dress, and made the whole journey bare-footed and bare-headed, asking alms by the way and weeping unceasingly for his crimes. From Liesse he went, in the same manner, to La Sainte Baume, in Provence, to obtain through the intercession of the holy Magdalen some portion of her spirit of penance and her love of Jesus. Returning to Rennes, he sold his post of councillor, and devoted his whole fortune to the relief of the poor and suffering, whom he frequently visited both in the hospitals and in the prisons. At length, after going through a course of the severest penance, he decided, by the advice of his director, on taking holy orders, and was ordained priest on the 28th of March, 1637. To the day of his death he persevered in the practice of the most rigorous mortification, condemning himself never to raise his eyes from the ground, making eight or ten hours' prayer a day, and taking scarcely any food from Thursday at mid-day until Sunday at the same hour. He died on the 8th of October, 1660.

We have said that he had come to Paris to make the acquaintance of P. Bernard; the manner of their meeting is too characteristic to be omitted. We give the story as P. Bernard himself told it to M. du Ferrier. "As I was going," says he, "in the direction of the Carthusians, I saw a man coming towards me, covered with dust, with his cassock tucked up, as sorry a looking figure as you can conceive; he stopped me, and asked if I could tell him where a certain M. Bernard lived, who went by the name of the Poor Priest. I inquired if he knew the man, and what he wanted with him. 'I am come,' said he, 'to make his acquaintance, for they tell me he is a good man, but a little crack-brained.' Feeling somewhat surprised

at this observation, 'I do not know,' answered I, 'that you are much wiser than he is.' 'Perhaps,' continued he, 'you are yourself the very man I am seeking.' 'Yes,' replied I, 'the very man.' Upon which he seized me in his arms, saying, 'I am Quériolet; I am come all the way from Brittany to have the pleasure of seeing you.' I cordially returned his embrace, for I knew him well by reputation, as having been converted at Loudun by means of the devil who had possession of the nuns."

The third of these eccentric but eminently holy men is Adrien Bourdoise, of whom mention has been made before in this history. He was the founder of the Seminary of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet at Paris, and appears to have been raised up by God to perform the office of pioneer in the work of ecclesiastical reform. Consumed with grief at the scandals which everywhere prevailed, and especially at the decay of ecclesiastical discipline, he lifted up his voice, like another John the Baptist, and called on men to do penance ere the wrath of God fell upon them.* Ignorant of fear and utterly regardless of what was said or thought of him, he spared no one, whatever might be his station, but spoke the truth plainly and without disguise, in season and out of season, with a freedom and a bluntness, a power of sarcasm, and sometimes even with a caustic facetiousness, which, while it irritated or moved to laughter, often succeeded in mitigating or repressing the evil he denounced where a milder manner and a more polished address would have failed of effect. So secularised both in spirit and in manners had the clergy become that they were not distinguishable in dress or demeanour from ordinary laymen, going about with moustaches and boots, like mere men of the world; indeed, it would seem that on occasions they did not take the trouble to put on their ecclesiastical attire even when performing the sacred duties of their calling. Going one day with M. Brandon, M. Amelote, and M. de Barrault into the abbey-church of St. Denis, M. Bourdoise caught sight of a man in the sacristy wearing a coat and short cloak, and booted and spurred,

* His character is aptly portrayed in the following distich:

"Hic fuit Elias more, et clamore Joannes,
Ore Nathan, curâ Paulus, amore Petrus."

A Life of this remarkable man is still a desideratum. There is a short memoir of him in manuscript (composed from a larger work, also in manuscript), which M. Faillon pronounces to be a masterpiece of biography.

who was hearing the confession of a priest vested in alb and stole. Immediately he went in search of the Prior, and said to him, "Come here, my father; come here, and see a soldier confessing a priest!" This stroke of severe pleasantry, as it may be called, had the desired effect, for the Prior instantly gave peremptory orders to the sacristan never to allow such scandals for the future.

Zealous and single-minded himself, he was impatient of the want of these qualities in others, and such men were peculiarly obnoxious to his raillery and wit; but where he perceived genuine earnestness and a heart-felt love of God it seemed as if he could not sufficiently express his admiration and sympathy, and all the hidden sweetness and kindliness of his nature was allowed to gush forth with an overflowing abundance which would have astonished those who knew only the more obvious and less engaging, though not less estimable, portions of his character. The apparent severity and almost rudeness of his speech and manner, * particularly when he wished to try a man's worth, may be inferred from the following incident. Knowing the zeal and piety of M. Olier and his friends, he wished to be better acquainted with them, especially with a view to conferring together on the obligations of the clerical state. The mode he adopted for gaining his object was such as would have occurred to none but himself. One morning M. Olier, accompanied by M. de Foix and M. du Ferrier, went to St. Nicolas, the model parish-church of Paris, for the purpose of saying Mass. They waited on M. Bourdoise, who received them courteously, but, when they mentioned the object of their visit and asked permission to say Mass, he replied, "No, gentlemen, I am sorry to refuse you, but you must have more of the look and demeanour of ecclesiastics before I can let you approach my altars." The young priests, imagining that so holy a man had perceived some impropriety or defect in their manners and conduct, reproached themselves accordingly and thanked him for his rebuke. This was just what he wanted; he continued the conversation, and soon their hearts were all a-glow from the affectionateness with which he spoke to them and the warmth of divine love which animated all he said. It need not be added that all three said Mass that morning at St. Nicolas. From that day a firm friendship was established between M. Olier and M. Bourdoise; and, if our Abbé honoured the Superior of the Oratory

* To wit, he one day reproached St. Vincent de Paul for his pusillanimity, and called him a *poule mouillée* (a chicken-hearted fellow).

as his spiritual father and guide, he now accepted the Rector of St. Nicolas as his master in the clerical life.

M. Bourdoise was not long in finding work to be done by M. Olier and his friends. In a little mission he had been giving at the château of the Présidente de Herse,* mother of M. Félix Vialar, one of M. Olier's associates, who was also his cousin, he had become acquainted with the spiritual destitution of the surrounding villages. The château stood in the parish of Monchefroy, near Houdan, in the diocese of Chartres; and hither he now sent our Abbé and others to evangelize the neighbourhood. They found an admirable coadjutrix in the mistress of the mansion, who, in her zeal for the reformation of the clerical body, had contributed largely towards the establishment of exercises for the candidates for orders both at Chartres and at Paris. One day they had scarcely begun dinner when M. Bourdoise put to them what appeared a whimsical question. "May I ask," said he, "whether these gentlemen who have been preaching with so much fervour have each done their sermon (avaient *fait* chacun leur sermon) to-day?" "How can you question it?" was the reply. "I question it," he rejoined, "until the fact be proved. We have already had our first course, and here is a crowd of poor people who have come twenty miles and more to hear you preach, and who have not a morsel of bread. Unless we give them something they will faint by the way. Now, then, gentlemen, let us do your sermon (*faisons votre sermon*):† let us give them the rest of our dinner, and content ourselves with a little dessert." The proposal was adopted, and instantly put in execution, to the edification and, no doubt, entire satisfaction of the poor villagers.

Shortly after, M. Olier gave another mission at Illiers, a small town near Chartres, which was attended with unusual effects, not only among the poor and working classes, but also among the higher ranks. The family of a M. Bellier, one of the Queen's officers and otherwise well connected, afforded a striking instance of this. He had some property in the neighbourhood, and his family consisted of four sons and two daughters. So deep was the impression produced

* Charlotte de Ligny, widow of the Président de Herse; she had been under the direction of St. Francis de Sales, who held her in the highest esteem.

† The double meaning of *faire sermon* cannot be fitly rendered in English by a single phrase; but what M. Bourdoise may be said to have wanted was a *practical* sermon.

by M. Olier's sermons that both daughters eventually entered the Order of the Visitation, and their two elder brothers also embraced the religious state. The third died young; the fourth, who was a most fervent Christian, died soon after marriage, and his widow consecrated herself to God in the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence.

It was while engaged in this mission that M. du Ferrier discovered one of those holy souls thousands of whom, it may be believed, have lived and died in obscurity, and whose supereminent sanctity is known only to God and His angels. He was summoned to attend a poor blind woman who was lying dangerously ill. Her name was Françoise Fouquet, and she was fifty-two years of age. She made her confession, but in a manner so spiritual, with so keen a discernment of her faults and of her infidelities to grace, that he was filled with astonishment and admiration. Her compunction for what hardly amounted to a defect or an imperfection affected him powerfully. He found, too, that she had a thorough knowledge of all those profound truths which had formed the subject of P. de Condren's conferences; and all this joined with the most exalted virtues. She had become blind when twelve years old, at which time also she lost her mother. Her father, who was a vine-dresser, took another wife, who treated her unkindly, driving her from the house at dawn of day, when her father was gone to his work. The child went and sat under a tree, crying and thinking of God; ready to receive her father when he returned in the evening. Yet she made no complaint, and to the day of his death her father never knew how cruelly she was treated. When he died her step-mother turned her out of doors; on which she went, accompanied by a cousin, on a pilgrimage to some of the famous shrines of the country, praying God to restore her sight. But, perceiving that it was His will that she should remain blind, she returned to Illiers, where she was able to earn a few pence by spinning, living the while on bread and water. The church was so near that she was able to spend a large portion of the day before the Tabernacle. For five or six years she had taken a little orphan girl, a relative, to live with her, whom she brought up in the faith and fear of God, the few pence she earned serving for their joint maintenance. She had never been favoured with any extraordinary graces, but she was wholly occupied with the presence and love of God. The purity of her conscience may be estimated by two *faults* of which she accused herself in conversation

with M. du Ferrier. The first was that, a neighbour having been crushed by a waggon, she had prayed and then touched him, and he was instantly healed; this, she thought, betokened presumptuousness and pride. The other that, on some mischievous person thrusting a piece of dung into her mouth, she had made a movement of repugnance, forgetful, as she said, of the gall and vinegar which her Saviour tasted upon the cross. One thing there was which for a while perplexed M. du Ferrier, that when he asked her whether from her heart she renounced the world, and put aside all desire of remaining in it, she replied, "I never give it a thought." On his repeating his question in another form, and asking her whether she did not deem those miserable who loved this earthly life, full of so many occasions of sin, her reply was still the same: "Sir, I never give it a thought." A third time he said, "Françoise, let us renounce the world, and all that belongs to it; and let us abandon ourselves entirely to our Lord, that He may separate us from it." And then came an answer which explained all: "Ah, Sir, excuse me; I do not wish so much as to think of the enemy of my Saviour." M. du Ferrier ascertained that for two days her sole sustenance had been a little water, which she was able to imbibe, through a quill, out of a bottle which stood by her bedside. He bade her landlady send for some soup for her from his lodging, but the girl who was deputed to fetch it took alarm at the numbers she saw gathered about the door, and returned without fulfilling her errand, so that the poor creature was left for a third night with nothing but her water-bottle. So far, however, from uttering any complaint she made excuses for the girl, and declared that she had suffered no inconvenience, and did not wish that any one should be put to any trouble on her account. She died on the day she had predicted. By some she was held to be a witch, because she cured so many sick persons by touching or praying for them, but the crowds that flocked to pray beside the humble pallet on which her body lay showed that the faithful people had not failed to discern in that poor afflicted woman all the lineaments of a true and exalted sanctity.

M. Olier was still in the full career of missionary zeal when he received a missive which obliged him to repair at once to Paris. This was a royal nomination to the Episcopal coadjutorship of Châlons-sur-Marne. The Bishop of that see, Henri Clausse de Marchaumont, was overwhelmed at the appalling condition to which the total loss of discipline had reduced his diocese, and had long

desired the establishment of an ecclesiastical seminary. He had addressed himself with this view to M. Bourdoise, both personally and through his grand-vicar. The latter wrote thus:—"The least of the ecclesiastics of Paris would here be worth their weight in gold. How many poor souls are perishing in these parts through the neglect of their pastors, who are ignorant, and more than ignorant, but whom it is impossible to remove from their benefices!" M. Bourdoise, however, was unable to supply the urgent need, and the Bishop then turned his thoughts to M. Olier, as the man most capable of effecting a reform which his own advanced age did not permit him to undertake. Accordingly, he solicited the Cardinal de Richelieu to recommend M. Olier to the King as his coadjutor. That great minister, who, whatever his faults, had an earnest zeal for the honour of the Church and the good of the realm, not only readily acceded to the Bishop's request but urged the appointment with all the force of his authority. "Sire," he said to Louis XIII., "in recommending M. Olier, I feel that I am proposing the man who, of all others, is the most fitted to fill this important see; and I even venture to assure your Majesty that in the whole kingdom I know no one who by his intelligence, piety, and prudence is more capable of doing honour to the Episcopate." An eulogium so emphatic did but express the unanimous sentiment of all good men, and in the July of 1639 the nomination received the royal assent.

In the estimation of the public the matter was now concluded, but the intended bishop was of quite another mind. P. de Condren's response was still the same: "God has other designs respecting you; they are not so brilliant or so honourable, but they are fraught with greater advantages to the Church." And this response was understood by M. Olier, in his humility, only as a signification of his unworthiness. "The dignity of which you speak," he wrote, in reply to the clergy of Le Puy on a future occasion,* "supposes great talents, which far exceed my capacity. I pray our Lord that He will give me grace to remain of the number of His least and lowest servants in the holy work of missions, and not compel Him to exclude me from it. Beg Him, Messieurs, to give me a share in those holy qualities which are necessary for the discharge of this Divine office; among others, a great reverence for God, a great love of my neighbour, a great annihilation of myself, and a perfect death to the world, without which I should not dare to call myself a priest

* See note, page 120.

or your brother." He therefore returned the brief to the Cardinal with all suitable acknowledgments; but the Cardinal declined to accept his refusal, and he was obliged to request a private interview, for the purpose of explaining the motives on which he was acting. A disinterestedness so rare, especially as a peerage was attached to the see in question, struck the minister with admiration, and he did not refrain from giving public testimony to the respect with which he regarded him.

Having failed to obtain M. Olier for his coadjutor, the Bishop of Châlons endeavoured at least to secure for his diocese the services of one who had taken an active part in the same labours of charity, and was known to possess a large share of his devotion and zeal. The prelate's choice fell on M. Félix Vialar (of whom mention has been already made), to our Abbé's extreme joy and satisfaction; feelings which, it is scarcely necessary to say, were not reciprocated by the members of M. Olier's own family, who were loud in their condemnation of what they deemed his obstinacy and folly. His mother especially set no bounds to her resentment, which became still more exasperated when, shortly after M. Vialar's nomination and before he had even received the bulls, the Bishop of Châlons died, and he became the occupant of the see. But M. Olier, foreseeing the storm, had left his mother's mansion and gone to reside at St. Maur-les-Fossés,* in a house belonging to M. Brandon, where he and his friends were in the habit of staying during the intervals of their Apostolic labours. It was now that, by P. de Condren's advice, they chose one of their number to be the head of their little community; the individual selected was M. Amelote, who, young as he was, for he had not yet attained his thirty-second year, had acquired a decided influence over the rest by his greater knowledge and experience, and a judgment singularly matured; and accordingly it was under his direction that the succeeding missions were conducted.

The first was that of Amiens, the occasion of which was an accidental sermon preached by M. Meyster, which threw the whole town into a ferment. The Bishop, M. de Caumartin, invited M. Olier to

* There was in the Abbey of St. Maur-les-Fossés a shrine of the Blessed Virgin, which was a frequented place of pilgrimage. It went by the name of Our Lady of Miracles, and such was the veneration in which it was held that the monks of St. Maur never entered it except barefooted. M. Olier himself received many tokens of the Divine favour in this privileged spot.

give a mission in the cathedral, but he was so absorbed in the study of Holy Scripture, in which the Spirit of God favoured him with extraordinary lights, that he hesitated to accept the invitation. In obedience, however, to P. de Condren's injunctions, he proceeded to Amiens, accompanied by MM. de Foix, du Ferrier, de Bassancourt, Brandon, and three others. It was a new and untried experiment, as, like the Vincentians and the Oratorians, they had hitherto confined their ministrations to villages and hamlets, and many grave and prudent persons strongly condemned the enterprise. But it was soon apparent that the blessing of God was with them, for their labours were attended with unprecedented success. The cathedral was crowded all through the day, and such multitudes besieged the confessionals that it was necessary to call in the aid of seventeen priests of the city.

Many notable conversions took place, the most extraordinary being that of a Swedish colonel, a Protestant, who was in command of a troop of horse in the town, consisting of eight hundred men; extraordinary, not only in itself, but in the effects it produced on others. M. Meyster learned that he was dangerously ill, and went late one evening, accompanied by M. du Ferrier, to visit him. They had some difficulty in gaining admission, as the colonel had given express orders that no priest should be permitted to enter his chamber, but, on their persisting, the mistress of the house, who was favourably disposed, allowed them to pass, and they found him lying in bed, with his wife and fifteen or twenty of his men sitting round the fire. The missionaries were civilly received, but, on M. Meyster telling the sick man that he had come for the purpose of offering him his services, he was met with the reply that he had no need of his instructions, that he was quite content with the religion in which he had been born, and wished to be left at peace. M. du Ferrier was greatly disheartened at this reply, but M. Meyster, asking for a light, produced a miniature in a case and, showing it to the Swede, inquired what he thought of it. The man answered that it was very beautiful. "It is the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ," said the priest; "will you not salute it?" The colonel did so in military fashion. Then, turning to his companion and to a young and devout Catholic who happened to be present, M. Meyster said "Let us pray to the Blessed Virgin for his conversion;" and, making all kneel down with him, he recited the Litany of Loreto. When it was ended, he laid both his hands on the shoulder of the

sick man, and said, "I am here to tell you from God that you must no longer delay your conversion." "Yes!" replied the man; "I wish to be converted, seeing it is the will of God." "But," resumed M. Meyster, "I mean that you should become a Catholic;" and, to the astonishment of all, the man continued, "I wish to be a Catholic, a Roman Catholic, with my wife and children, and to abandon the religion I have hitherto professed, and which I now believe to be false." M. Meyster received his abjuration on the spot, heard his confession at his own earnest request, and gave him absolution. The next day the Bishop of Amiens went and administered Confirmation to him.

One remarkable circumstance remains to be told. Three days afterwards, M. Meyster was hearing confessions late at night, when (it being 11 o'clock) he was called away to take a little food, in order that he might not be prevented celebrating Mass the next morning. He was in the act of saying grace when he suddenly stopped, threw on his cloak, and saying, "This is no time for eating, the colonel is dying," hastened out of the house. All was silent when he reached the sick man's lodging, and he was assured that there was no alteration for the worse. Proceeding, however, to his room, the Swede no sooner saw him than he cried, "Ah! Sir, help me." M. Meyster begged him to join in spirit with the acts of faith, hope, and charity which he himself repeated aloud, and gave him the last absolution. The man warmly expressed his gratitude, and, praying God to bless his benefactor, he expired. So quickly had all been dispatched that M. Meyster, after reciting the prayers for the departed, had time to eat his supper before the clock struck twelve.

During the three days which elapsed after his conversion, the colonel had acted the part of an apostle to his men, and with such success that many of them were converted. The work thus begun was concluded by M. Olier and his colleagues, and, indeed, by the men themselves, for they who had yielded to grace became missionaries to their comrades, and a strange, and an almost incredible, spectacle was to be seen in the streets of Amiens. When the priests emerged from their lodgings in the early morning they found themselves surrounded by bands of soldiers, complaining that they were unable to get near the confessionals, around which penitents had been gathered, several ranks deep, two hours before daybreak. The missionaries explained that they must in justice take all comers in turn, and that they could not therefore show them any preference;

on which, to excite their compassion, and, as though to compel the priests to hear them, the men began telling their sins out aloud, and such as were Catholics numbered up the years that had elapsed since they had been at confession. "We may have to mount horse any day—any hour," they cried. "Are we to go to be killed before we have got absolution?" An appeal at once so piteous and so vehement could not fail of its effect. The people were so moved by their fervour that they gave up their places to the soldiers, and they made their confession. Three days afterwards this very troop fell into an ambuscade, and was cut off to a man.

So great was the enthusiasm which these extraordinary conversions caused in the town that the corporation of the city proposed sending the missionaries a present of wine and sweetmeats, the customary mark of honour shown to the Governor of the province on occasion of his official entry. As M. Olier and his friends never received presents, and would have been puzzled how to dispose of six large pewter vessels full of wine, with the city arms thereon, to be presented by as many town-sergeants in their scarlet robes of office, they suggested that the whole should be carried to the public hospital for the use of the inmates. However, there were not wanting those who made the very success of the missionaries the occasion of a charge against them. Some monks of the place, jealous of the influence acquired by these secular priests, went to the Governor, the Duc de Chaulne, and gravely represented that M. Meyster had obtained this ascendancy over the inhabitants in order that he might deliver up the town to the King of Spain, whose born subject he was. The Governor was foolish enough to listen to these envious counsellors, and actually wrote more than once to the Cardinal de Richelieu apprizing him of the threatened danger. The Cardinal, however, was too sagacious to be so easily imposed upon, and, after communicating privately with the Intendant of Picardy, who was the brother-in-law of M. Brandon, to ascertain the truth of the matter, informed M. le Duc that he need not be under any alarm.

This mission, which lasted five months, was followed by another at Montdidier. Here they took up their abode at the Hôtel Dieu, served by Sisters who were known throughout France as the *Illuminées of Picardy*. Besides the deplorable illusions into which they had been betrayed by their former director, the notorious fanatic, Labadie, much disunion prevailed among them. Moved with compassion for their miserable condition, P. de Condren

counselled the missionaries to observe great moderation and charity in dealing with these "foolish virgins," bidding them comport themselves among them like St. Paul among the Corinthians, knowing nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Acting faithfully on this counsel, the influence of their daily example was so effectual that the nuns, one and all, made a general confession, their eyes were opened to discern their dangerous errors, and peace was restored to the community. On learning the wonderful change which had been wrought, the Bishop desired to make M. du Ferrier Superior of the Hospital, a post which was then vacant, but by P. de Condren's advice he declined the office, on the ground that he was not endowed with sufficient spiritual insight to undertake so responsible a position as that of director of religious, and was qualified only to conduct the faithful along the ordinary paths of the Christian life.

At the close of this mission M. Olier and his associates were invited to Abbeville, but P. de Condren, fearing lest they might be overburdened with work, bade them return to Paris. After a few weeks' repose, instead of resuming their labours in Picardy, they went, at the invitation of the Bishop, M. Éléonor de Valencé, to Mantes, in the diocese of Chartres. This was in the month of July, 1640. The fruits were, as usual, most abundant; they succeeded in terminating amicably as many as five hundred law-suits; an event so astounding that certain interested persons accused the missionaries before the Parliament of Paris of making the occupation of a lawyer a sin beyond the grace of absolution. To these wiseacres the Chancellor simply replied that the Parliament of Paris had nothing to do with the sacrament of penance.

The labours of the missionaries were not confined to the laity, their zeal extended also to the clergy. Already they contemplated a prodigious work—the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline throughout the whole sacerdotal order. This appears from a letter addressed to them by M. François de Harlay, Archbishop of Rouen, in which, referring to a book they were about to publish for the instruction of the clergy, he proffers his advice as to the nature of its contents and promises at their request to give the work his personal revision. It was probably with a view to this publication that, after the mission at Mantes was concluded, M. Olier and his friends retired to a country place that belonged to one of them at Loreau, near Épernon, in the diocese of Chartres. Here they were visited by M. Bourdoise, who,

ever consumed with the desire of communicating to other priests what he called the parochial spirit, began at once to give them a lesson on a subject of which, by their own confession, they had very little knowledge. Ever on the move, and engaged continually in giving missions up and down the country, they were but imperfectly acquainted with the ceremonies of the Church, the manner of performing the more solemn functions, and, in short, the whole art, as it may be said, of regulating a large parish church. M. Bourdoise, to his great surprise, found that they each said Mass and performed their other devotions in the chapel of the house, instead of repairing to the parish church, and he proposed that they should all go forthwith and solemnize High Mass in the face of the congregation, it being St. Matthew's day (September 21, 1640). With his characteristic energy he instantly set every one his part, and High Mass accordingly was celebrated, with all the prescribed ceremonies, to the great edification of the people and, it may be added, the no small surprise of the chief actors themselves, who scarcely knew how they had been able to acquit themselves so well. Solemn Vespers were improvised with equal rapidity and equal success, P. de Condren, who had come to Loreau, assisting with the rest. The lesson learned that day was not forgotten; wherever they went the parish church was now their centre and their place of resort; the ceremonial of the Church was accurately studied, and every endeavour used to celebrate the Divine offices, not only with befitting decorum, but with all possible solemnity. The example became contagious: a taste, or rather a zeal, for the beauty and decorum of God's house began to spread among the clergy, and soon the progress of the missionaries through the country might be traced as much by the order that reigned in the sanctuary as by the devotion of the people. Delighted with the docility and earnestness of his disciples, M. Bourdoise invited them to frequent the church of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet whenever they were at Paris, and it was there that they perfected themselves in the ecclesiastical chant and ceremonies.

There was, indeed, a danger for a time that these cordial relations might have been interrupted through the intrigues of the too famous Abbé de Saint-Cyran, and the subject is worthy of notice, as indicating what first gave occasion to the repugnance which M. Olier and his associates entertained for this disingenuous leader of the Jansenistic sect. With a subtlety only equalled by his arrogance, he sought, in private conversation, to imbue the minds of these eccle-

siastics with a low opinion of the Council of Trent, as though it had not been guided by the Holy Spirit and had shown no true understanding of the doctrine of grace. Having failed with them, he tried his arts on M. Bourdoise, who was not conversant with the particular points in dispute, and by adroitly insisting on the necessity of restoring ecclesiastical discipline, as practised in primitive times—a subject on which he knew his hearer to be peculiarly susceptible—he succeeded so far as to produce a certain confusion in his mind.* But it was not long before this good man became aware of the trap which had been laid for him, and broke off all personal intercourse with Saint-Cyran. That arch-deceiver, however, did not relax in his efforts to insinuate the virus of his teaching among the inmates of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet, and contrived to get one of his partisans admitted into the seminary. Warned by M. Amelote of the real character and designs of this secret traitor, M. Bourdoise eventually dismissed him but, unfortunately, not before he had succeeded in perverting one of the most promising members of the community, Claude Lancelot, who afterwards distinguished himself in the world of letters and ranks among the foremost of the Port-Royalist divines. It is a satisfaction, however, to learn that, despite this untoward event, there was never any actual estrangement between M. Bourdoise and P. de Condren's disciples, and that M. Olier, in particular, continued to regard him with the same filial affection and esteem.

An anecdote is related of M. Bourdoise so characteristic of his contempt for human respect and his uncompromising ecclesiastical spirit that it may well be inserted here.

One day, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon,† niece of Cardinal de Richelieu, went to hear Mass at St. Nicolas, and her attendants placed her cushion within the sanctuary. Whereupon, M. Bourdoise with his own hands removed it into the choir, at the same time respectfully signifying to the Duchess that the sanctuary was not the place for the laity. When the Cardinal was informed of the circumstance he sent for the Rector. M. Bourdoise at first refused to go, saying that he

* *L'esprit un peu embarrassé* are the words employed in one of the earliest (manuscript) biographies of M. Bourdoise.

† She had been left a widow at the age of eighteen. Being compelled by her rank and the affection with which the Queen regarded her to remain at Court; she nevertheless spent a large portion of her time at the Carmelite convent, to which, but for her uncle, she would have retired altogether, and distributed her wealth among destitute parishes, hospitals, and prisons.

had not the honour of his Eminence's acquaintance, and that the message must have been intended for some one else. However, not only did he receive a second summons, but a carriage was sent to convey him to the Cardinal's *hôtel.* Of this M. Bourdoise would not avail himself, but proceeded on foot, and was at once admitted to the great man's presence, when the following dialogue ensued. "So it was you who turned my niece out of the choir?" "No, Monseigneur, it was not I." "Why, is not your name Bourdoise?" "Yes, Monseigneur." "It *was* you, then, who put that affront upon her." "Pardon me, Monseigneur." "Who, then, was it?" "Your Eminence and the prelates in council assembled, who interdicted the laity, and particularly women, from entering the sanctuary, in order that the clergy might have free space for their performance of the sacred functions."* The Cardinal was taken aback at this unexpected rejoinder, and was not very well pleased. The Duchess, however, to her credit be it said, received the rebuke in good part, and treated M. Bourdoise ever after with especial regard. She went frequently to St. Nicolas, proved herself a great benefactor to the seminary, and did not forget it in her will.

* Referring to the 4th canon of the Council held at Tours, in 567, which forbids laymen to stand among the clergy near the altar during Mass or Office, Fr. Bridgett writes, "The reasons for excluding the laity were not Pharisaic pride and the assumption of special sanctity on the part of the clergy, but motives of decency and order. Had the laity been admitted to the sanctuary, psalmody would have become almost impossible. Not the humble and devout, but the proud and worldly, would have coveted these 'first places in the synagogue,' and unseemly contests would have arisen, besides scandal to the poor and other inconveniences which may easily be imagined." *History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain*, Vol. i. chap. ii.

CHAPTER VII.

TRIALS OF M. OLIER, INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR. DEATH OF P. DE CONDREN.

HITHERTO we have seen M. Olier in the full and vigorous exercise of all his natural powers, bodily and mental, favoured of God and honoured among men. He had encountered obstacles and contradictions, but they seemed ever to give way before him. He had undergone many interior trials, but they were of short duration, and he came forth all the stronger for the contest. He had been sick and disabled, but he was restored speedily and as by miracle. Entire freedom from pain and inward affliction he seems never to have enjoyed, but his sufferings neither attracted attention nor incapacitated him for severe and prolonged exertion. Over his immediate friends and associates he exercised a powerful influence; as a missionary he achieved extraordinary success; in short, he had acquired the highest reputation as well for his abilities as for his virtues. But in all this there was danger, and he knew it; the consideration with which he was regarded was a perpetual martyrdom to him, and he trembled lest he should yield to the solicitations of vainglory by which he was unceasingly assailed.

It was during the illness he had in Auvergne, at the close of the mission of 1637, that his eyes (he says) began to be opened, and he was enabled to perceive how much of self-love mixed itself up with everything he did. The sight of what he was filled him with dismay, and he became possessed with an intense desire of being wholly united with God, so that he cared not what might befall him if only he could attain to this blessed state. His soul was assailed with foul, afflicting thoughts, and often during the day he felt moved to repeat those words of the royal Psalmist: "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;*" his confessors, too (he says), guided by Divine Wisdom, used frequently to give them as his

* Psalm L. 12.

sacramental penance. Sometimes, after one of his severest paroxysms, he would conceive a profound idea of the soul perfected in God, and would experience a powerful attraction to aspire after such a state. In his solitary walks this idea would recur to his mind, and, raising his eyes to heaven, he would say, all bathed in tears, "O life divine! life divine! when shall I live only of God?" In July, 1638, while in retreat, preparatory to going to Brittany, he was moved to make two petitions: first, that the vexations and annoyances he was then enduring in consequence of certain legal proceedings in which he was involved, as well as from other causes, might be exchanged for spiritual trials more beneficial to his soul; and, secondly, that the good opinion which men had of him might be turned into contempt. And now both of his requests were about to be granted. God would raise him to a still higher degree of sanctity; He would empty him entirely of self, and form within him the life of His dear Son; and to this end He subjected him to humiliations the most painful to pride and self-love. He withdrew from him, not only those spiritual gifts for which he had been conspicuous, but the exercise of his natural powers and faculties. At times he lost the use of his bodily limbs; they would suddenly refuse to obey the motions of his will, as though God would show him by actual experience that we live and move only in Him. Sometimes he trembled and staggered as he walked, at others he was unable to put one foot before another; he could not lift his food to his mouth; he wondered (he says) to see others eating with such facility, while everything he took seemed as if it were put into a lifeless body. His mind was at the same time affected with a similar torpidity: his memory and understanding failed him; often he knew neither what he said nor what was said to him; he felt (as he describes it) like a deaf man in a crowd, neither hearing nor comprehending what was going on around him. He would have a clear perception of what he was about to express, and would have begun to put his thought into words, when in an instant it would pass from him, and he no longer recollected what it had been in his mind to say; and this, not merely on subjects of high import, but in the commonest things, and while in easy converse with a friend. He seemed also to have forgotten the art of writing, and would be hours accomplishing three or four lines, and those (as he adds) all awry. He would suddenly forget where he was going, and the names of the persons he wished to see; he would lose his way in the streets, so that he was obliged to be

always accompanied by a servant. His mother, seeing him in this miserable state, told people they would take him for an idiot or a fool; while he, on his part, offered himself to God to deprive him altogether of his senses if such were His holy will.*

"Our good Master," he says, "withdrew His succours, not only from the natural faculties of my soul, but also in regard to His supernatural gifts. The soul elevated in grace and, as it were, naturalised in charity, looks upon these succours as if they belonged to it: it believes falsely, and lets itself be secretly persuaded, that this grace is a thing of its own and its own property, like the wings which grow naturally on birds and are a part of themselves. Hence it follows that it esteems itself and prides itself on these gifts. Hitherto I had regarded them as attached to my person, and, when God withdrew them, I was left in a strange state of darkness and dryness. Always empty of God, at least sensibly, filled with sentiments of pride and self-love, encompassed with human respects, harassed with fears, I was for ever seeking to know what the world thought of me; whether I passed for an ignoramus and a fool, a man destitute of piety, charity, and patience. I could think of nothing else, nor drive such thoughts out of my mind. These feelings of pride and human respect, which everywhere pursued me, were a perpetual crucifixion to me, because I seemed to consent to them. In my inmost soul I wished to do everything for God, and my greatest torment was the having been unfaithful to Him in the slightest matter, or persuading myself that in my actions I had taken anything to myself."

He says the same of the blessings which had accompanied his ministry: how he had been tempted to think that they were attached to his person, and how it pleased God to undeceive him by showing him that the gifts he had possessed were not his own, and that,

* Extraordinary as these trials were, they are not of unfrequent occurrence in the spiritual life of chosen souls. Boudon describes the state to which P. Surin was reduced in very similar terms. "For a long time" (he says) "he was unable to read, and for nearly twenty years unable to write. He could neither dress nor undress himself, and was obliged to lie down in his clothes. All food, however excellent, was tasteless to him; wine was to him like pure water. For eight days he remained dumb, unable to make his confession except by signs; and such was the extremity to which he was reduced that he could not even walk, had hardly any use of his hands, and for fifteen years could not see things distinctly." *L' Homme de Dieu*, Part iii. chap. x. The state of his mind corresponded with that of his body, and he was regarded as a madman.

deprived of His aids, he was powerless. He was unable to preach; often, when directed to do so, he could find neither ideas nor language; if he attempted to expound a text of Scripture, he became so confused and the terms he employed were so ill chosen, that he was obliged to desist. Yet on one occasion (he says), as though God would not have him wholly discouraged, he delivered a discourse before a large audience with more than his usual facility. In the confessional he did not know what to say to his penitents, and in his misery could not refrain from deploring their ill fortune in having recourse to so incompetent a guide. With all this was conjoined great interior darkness and distress. He seemed to be abandoned by God, and his soul was filled with disquietude and fear. If he opened the Gospel, or any spiritual book, his eye was sure to light on some passage which spoke of the narrowness of the way of salvation and the judgments of God on the wicked; while the name of Judas was like the stroke of a dagger to his heart. "Ah, Sirs!" he once said to his colleagues, "you may think that the traitor is mentioned only four or five times in Holy Scripture, but his name occurs more than twenty times." He felt as if he were himself the Judas of the little company, and the thought was never absent from his mind. One day, when saying Mass at the high altar, having to read this hated name, he was seized with such an agitation that it was with difficulty he could proceed. He was harassed, moreover, with scruples of conscience, so that (as he declares) he was a torment to his confessor, his colleagues, and to everybody. If any one spoke of the marks of reprobation he recognized them all in himself; everything that fell from the mouth of his director, or of anyone else, seemed to condemn him; nothing was capable of affording him consolation.

The name of God recalled to him only a cruel, arbitrary, inexorable being, whose pleasure it was to make his creatures suffer; while the mention of Hell had a certain terrible fascination for him, as being the place to which he was destined for all eternity. Although he remained constant in prayer he received not a single ray of light or comfort; he could not lift up his heart to God, and shrank from presenting himself before the Tabernacle.* The only devotion of

* The following passage which fell under the writer's observation while engaged on the above account of M. Olier's interior sufferings may aptly be cited here. It occurs in a touching narrative of God's dealings with a holy Tertiary of St. Francis which appeared in the pages of the *Month*, February, 1882

which he was capable was that of the rosary, which he vowed to recite daily for a year, in order to recover the presence of the Holy Spirit, of which he deemed himself deprived. He experienced also a sensible satisfaction in making a pilgrimage; but in all things else he felt as though his heart were dead within him; he seemed (as he says) to have sunk utterly back into his own nothingness. One day P. de Condren assured him that all these things were but pains and trials, to which he answered, "Would to God they were but pains, and that they might even last for all eternity! So that I were not abhorred of God I should not distress myself;" and, in saying this, tears fell in large drops from his eyes. In his anguish he took refuge in one of the chapels of Notre Dame where hitherto he had received only caresses of divine love, but there also he found no consolation, and he could only lie with his face on the ground and prostrate himself interiorly before the Majesty of God. All the favours and consolations he had enjoyed were now to him but mere delusions; he believed that he was the object only of the hatred of God, and so dreadful was the thought that his whole appearance was altered, and his countenance became so pale and haggard that it

"When Almighty God bestows marvellous and shining graces upon great souls, He is never slow in visiting them with overwhelming and searching trials also, which lay bare the inmost thoughts and intents of their hearts, rooting up and destroying every fibre of self-confidence and self-love. Such trials are, in fact, surpassing tokens of His Divine predilection. . . . Not only did good men who stood in God's place to her, stand aloof and add to her sufferings, but God Himself appeared to desert her. The consolations of which before she had so abundantly partaken were almost wholly withdrawn. She was assailed by painful scruples, tormented with dryness, desolation, and darkness of soul, and violent temptations against faith and hope assaulted her. Above all, the fearful thought that she was not among the number of the elect was continually before her."

The biographers of St. Francis de Sales relate how he suffered from a similar dread of reprobation. He was tempted to think that the spiritual dryness and insensibility that afflicted him was the punishment of some grievous sin, by which he had lost the grace and friendship of God and had become an object of His wrath and hatred. In spite of all his prayers and protestations of fidelity and love, the terrible thought continually recurred; he could not banish it from his mind, and nothing gave him comfort or relief; so that he remained sunk in a state of profound melancholy and spent whole days and nights in weeping and lamenting. His features showed the mental tortures he was enduring; his countenance became pale and emaciated; he could neither eat, drink, nor sleep; he could scarcely walk or sustain himself on his trembling limbs. Marsollier, quoted by M. Faillon, Part i. Liv. vii. chap. vi. n. Hamon, Liv i. chap. iii.

was feared he was sinking under some fatal disorder. His sleep was disturbed with horrible dreams; he would awake in the night and think he saw devils at the foot of his bed, ready to drag him down to Hell. The particular temptation with which he was assailed was, not to do evil, but to perform extraordinary acts and practise excessive mortifications, which might be the occasion to him of vainglory; and once he heard a voice accusing him of pride, in tones so terrible that he remained shuddering and trembling in all his limbs.

This depression of spirits and loss of capacity provoked animadversions of the most humiliating kind. It was supposed that he now bitterly regretted having refused the coadjutorship of Châlons, and that this was the cause of his melancholy and want of energy. The King, the Cardinal de Richelieu, as well as the bishops and others about the court, indulged in many a jest at his expense, and he became (he says) the laughing-stock of the whole town. His colleagues shared the general opinion; they looked upon him as a vain-glorious man, who wished to gain a character for disinterestedness but had broken down in the attempt. M. Amelote, who was now (as has been said) the superior of the little community, wishing to try of what spirit he was, would laughingly ask him whether he had ordered his equipage yet, and what number of servants he intended to have in his train. These bantering questions, so little in harmony with the sentiments of compunction and self-reproach with which his soul was filled, jarred painfully on his feelings; and one day he replied, "Ah! father, such thoughts are far from me; I wish only for a hole in which to do penance for my sins." He was now convinced that there was an intention to exclude him from the society; in fact, M. Amelote had one day told him to do as he pleased, and go where he would, for they had nothing to say to him; and on another occasion had advised him to resign his benefices, and hide himself in that hole he talked about. All this he bore with the utmost meekness, and in his humility deemed himself deserving only of contempt. So far from taking offence at M. Amelote's treatment of him, he regarded him as his truest friend, who occupied himself with his spiritual interests as though they had been his own, and was favoured with particular lights respecting the state of his soul. The truth, however, was that both M. Amelote and the rest wholly misapprehended M. Olier's character and conduct; they thought they perceived in him an arrogant and intract-

able temper, and believed that God had withdrawn His Spirit from him and refused any longer to bless his ministrations. This apparent pride and haughtiness of manner was, indeed, not altogether imaginary; M. Olier was himself most painfully conscious of it, but it seemed as if his movements were not subject to his own control, and that, in spite of himself, he had at times the air of a man full of his own conceits. The result was that he was interdicted from preaching and other similar employments, even to the hearing confessions, except in cases of absolute necessity; to all which he silently submitted, without seeking an explanation or attempting to justify himself.

Such were the extraordinary trials to which this holy man was subjected for the space of two years; and if we look for a reason in the designs of Divine Providence, over and above his personal sanctification, we may find it in this: that it might be proved beyond all dispute that he who was to inaugurate the great work of ecclesiastical reform was chosen for the office, not by men, but by God. M. Amelote had been preferred before him by his associates; M. Olier had become the object of suspicion and contempt; and yet he it was, and not M. Amelote, who was destined by God to be the founder and first Superior of the Community and Seminary of St. Sulpice.

Even P. de Condren apparently fell in with the general opinion, and for the two last months of his life seemed to withdraw his confidence from him. This to M. Olier was the greatest blow of all, for he no longer experienced the same consolations in his direction which he had hitherto had, and was left, as it were, in a state of complete abandonment. Herein, however, he recognized the hand of God, who would have him cease from all dependence on creatures, however holy, and adhere to Him alone. And yet, for all his coldness and reserve, it would appear that this master of the spiritual life discerned in the state to which his pupil was reduced, only a further proof of God's love and favour towards him and one of the stages in that course of perfection along which he was being led. In the very last interview which M. Olier had with him in December, 1640, he spoke much of the adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as being the peculiar devotion of priests and that which he should labour most to propagate; bidding him pay particular honour to that angel of the Apocalypse who will come at the end of the present dispensation and is described as

casting on the earth the fire with which he had filled his censer from the heavenly altar. He spoke also of the singular graces with which God had gifted individual souls. M. Vincent (de Paul), he said, was remarkable for prudence, M. Amelote for wisdom, while his own peculiar gift he considered to be that of a childlike spirit; and, on M. Olier asking what was his particular grace, he answered that it was the same as his own; that (as M. Olier himself writes) God would have him conduct himself after the manner of a child, without care or deliberation, with all simplicity, casting himself into His arms, as into those of a father; desirous only of pleasing Him, loving Him, praising Him, seeking only His glory, and willing to be himself despised. P. de Condren added that he should take as his director the Infant Jesus: a suggestion the more remarkable that M. Olier, unknown to his spiritual guide, had begun to practise this particular devotion from the time that P. de Condren appeared to become estranged from him.

It was now that Marie Rousseau began to take a prominent part in promoting the twofold object which she had so long cherished in her heart—the erection of a seminary for the training and educating of priests and the reform of the parish of St. Sulpice. For some time past she had known by divine revelation that this object was on the eve of accomplishment, and had felt a strong conviction that God was calling her to co-operate with Him in the furtherance of His designs; that it was she whom He had chosen as His instrument for urging upon the destined ministers of His will the duty of fulfilling their vocation, and assuring them of success despite all the opposition that could be raised against them. Nevertheless, perceiving clearly as she did the immense difficulties that would have to be encountered, she shrank from yielding an interior assent to the call. Again and again she besought the Lord with tears that He would not lay this charge upon her. Who was she that she should be an Apostle to the priests of God? She was but a poor weak woman, and would be treated as a wild enthusiast, or her motives would be misconstrued, and she would be repulsed with scorn. This struggle continued for several years, until her director, P. Armand, of the Society of Jesus, who from time to time had bidden her offer her communions for this intention, at last engaged her to make an act of consecration by which she bound herself to devote all her energies to the holy enterprise and to the assistance of those to whom God should entrust the conduct of it.

On the 8th of December, 1638, P. Armand died, and she was led to take as her director P. Hugues Bataille, a Benedictine of St. Germain's Abbey, of whom we shall learn more in the sequel. With P. de Condren this holy widow had never had any direct communications, although, through the medium of P. Jean Chrysostôme, of the Third Order of St. Francis, a man universally esteemed for his great spiritual discernment,* they had asked counsel of each other and begged each other's prayers for their several intentions. One day, however, that she was in the church of the Oratory, in the Rue St. Honoré, where P. de Condren was then residing, an interior voice said to her, "Here is your father," the meaning of which at the time she did not apprehend. But in the month of March, 1640, a message was brought her from P. de Condren by P. Jean Chrysostôme and F. Jean-Baptiste, a Brother of the same Order to the effect that he wished to speak with her, and that, if she did not come to him, he would go to her. Accordingly she repaired to the Oratory in their company.

The interview took place on the 6th of the same month, and, as it was the first, so also it was the last, which these privileged souls held together. For more than two hours P. de Condren gave vent to the thoughts with which his soul was habitually engaged, discoursing sublimely of God and the beauty and glory of the Most Holy Trinity; and then he turned to the subject which lay closest to his heart, the foundation of seminaries in which the clergy might be sanctified for the duties of their holy office, and said that he had it in his mind to write four treatises for the use of ecclesiastical students, and intended to retire for that purpose to the Oratorian house of Notre Dame des Vertus. Before leaving him, Marie Rousseau urged him to fulfil his intention without delay, and, on the Father replying that he should begin that very Lent, she told him that he might, indeed, think of doing so, but that he would never put his design into execution, and would not witness even the beginning of the work on which it had pleased God to impart to him such luminous ideas.

As Marie Rousseau had forwarned him so it came to pass. Lent sped away, the year advanced, and yet he had not put pen to paper.

* A Life of this holy man was written by Boudon and is among his collected works. Whether P. Jean Chrysostôme was ever formally declared Venerable the present writer has been unable to ascertain. French biographers are apt to give this appellation to saintly persons in the general, and not in the technical and authoritative, meaning of the term.

She had now become fully aware,—as, indeed, had been dimly disclosed to her before,—that the men who were destined to accomplish the work which had been for years the subject of her prayers would be chosen from among P. de Condren's disciples, and that *he* was the father of whom the voice had spoken to her. Frequent communications took place between them, through the usual channel, on the one great theme of common interest, and Marie Rousseau never ceased importuning the holy man to speak what was in his mind, for that his time was short. But it was not until the very day before he was seized with his last illness that he opened his lips on the subject which was ever in his thoughts, and even then, as it appeared, more by accident than from premeditation. M. du Ferrier had gone to consult him as usual, when, in the course of conversation, the Father repeated a remark he had before made, that there was a still greater work to be done than that in which he and his companions were at present engaged; and, on M. du Ferrier inquiring what greater work there could be than that of converting sinners, he replied, "I will tell you." M. du Ferrier, however, fearing that he had asked the question from a motive of mere curiosity, would have had him be silent, but he said, "No, make yourself easy, it is not curiosity; it is an effect of the Providence of God, who would have me at length make known to you what it is He requires of you. The time is come." He then appointed an early hour on the following day for pursuing the conversation. On returning the next morning, M. du Ferrier found the Baron de Renty with the Father, but, on the latter observing that the young priest was faithful to his appointment, M. de Renty took his leave. When they were left alone, P. de Condren proceeded to show that the effects of the missions, great as they were at the time, were not as lasting as they otherwise might be, because of the lack of zealous pastors. It was useless (he said) to endeavour to change those who had been raised to the priesthood without due preparation; it was necessary to educate an entirely new race of ecclesiastics, and this could be effected only by means of seminaries, such as the Council of Trent had enjoined. M. du Ferrier pointed to the attempts which had been made at Toulouse, Bordeaux, and Rouen, but which had failed notwithstanding all the exertions of Cardinals de Joyeuse and de Sourdis. The Father, however, in return showed him the reason of this failure, maintaining that the youths admitted into an ecclesiastical seminary ought to be of such an age that it might be possible to judge of their character, and, after

due trial, to determine whether they possessed the necessary qualifications. He entered at some length into the subject, and assured M. du Ferrier of the Divine assistance, and of entire success, if only the undertaking were commenced at once, and before the demon of discord had introduced dissensions into the clerical body. This he said with a prophetic eye to the evils with which the Jansenistic heresy was about to afflict the Church; and he ended by counselling him to avoid contentions and "strifes of words," and never to espouse any side but that of the Holy See.

Ten o'clock struck while he was speaking, and the Frère Martin, his assistant, came to remind him that it was time to say Mass. He bade him wait awhile, and the Brother retired. At eleven he came again, when, to M. du Ferrier's amazement, who knew with what circumspection the holy man guarded every word he uttered, P. de Condren said to him, "Brother, if you knew what I was about you would not be so urgent; for I am engaged upon something even of greater consequence than that you would have me do." He continued discoursing till noon, when he said, "Brother Martin will be losing all patience; we must reserve the rest till to-morrow;" but when the morrow came he was too unwell to receive visitors, and M. du Ferrier never saw him again. On his making the others acquainted with what had been said to him thus far they received his report with joy; M. Amelote, however, expressing some surprise that P. de Condren had never spoken to him on the subject. In the evening, M. du Ferrier, fearing that the Father might die before he had concluded his instructions, sent in a note to the priest who was in attendance upon him, begging him to entreat the sick man, if God should call him to Himself, to bequeath his spirit and his lights to some one who should be able to supply what he had left unsaid. The result of this appeal we shall presently see.

On the morrow, being the 7th of January, 1641, P. de Condren died. His last hours were troubled with the thought of the evils which the Jansenistic heresy was about to introduce into the Church. "I foresee a schism," he said to the assembled Fathers; "and in two years it will disclose itself." His soul, like that of his Saviour, was inundated with a mortal sadness, and so profound a sense had he of the purity and holiness of God that it seemed to be more than he could bear, deeming himself only worthy that his body should be exposed upon a gibbet as a warning to all evil-doers. At the same time those who were gathered round his bed felt their hearts filled

with an ineffable peace and joy, as he spoke to them of the things of God with an elevation and an eloquence such as even he had never before displayed. No sooner had he departed than the world seemed at once to recognise the consummate sanctity of one whose life had been hidden from its sight. His virtues became the theme of every tongue. Louis XIII., disregarding the express wishes of the deceased, ordered his obsequies to be conducted with unusual honours, and, by the command of the Queen, M. de Virazel, Bishop of St. Brieuc, delivered the funeral oration. The people flocked in crowds to pray beside the bier on which the body lay in the church of the Oratory, and gazed with admiration on the saintly countenance lit up with a glow of colour which it never wore in life; and, indeed, when P. Bernard, with others, unclosed the eyelids, the orbs were filled with such a lustrous brightness that they exclaimed he was not dead.

P. de Condren, as has been said, passed away on the morrow of the Epiphany, and that very night he appeared to M. Olier in a halo of brilliant light, and told him that he left him the heir of his spirit and his counsels, in conjunction with two others whom he named, one of whom was M. Amelote. On the night also of his burial he appeared, clad in his sacerdotal vestments and surrounded with glory, to M. Meyster, who had an intention of leaving the society, bidding him abandon his design, for that God Himself would bring about a separation, seeing that He destined his colleagues to take part in the establishment of a seminary, which should be the source of the greatest benefits to the Church; a seminary, the directors of which should be bound, not by vows, but by ecclesiastical rules in obedience to their bishops. M. Meyster communicated to M. du Ferrier all that the Father had said to him, which tallied exactly with the instructions he had himself received from him when alive, although M. Meyster had not heard a word previously on the subject.* M. Olier, however, kept his own counsel; and it is only from the *Mémoires* which he composed by order of his director, and solely for his inspection, that we incidentally learn the nature

* With reference to these appearances of P. de Condren after his decease, M. Faillon is anxious to show (B. vii. n. 9) that M. Olier and his associates were very far from being ready believers in the marvellous. P. de Condren himself discouraged anything approaching to credulity, and M. Olier had so great a distrust of imputed supernatural gifts or extraordinary states of prayer that he bade his followers maintain a strict silence concerning such things, and was strongly opposed to their taking part in exorcisms, except in cases of necessity, because of the imminent danger either of deception or of delusion.

of the revelation that was made to him. All the time that the body of P. de Condren lay exposed in the church of the Oratory, and on the day of his funeral, M. Olier felt himself (as he says) more and more penetrated with that spirit of self-annihilation which was so conspicuous in the deceased; indeed, he was so wholly engrossed therewith that it formed his sole interior occupation. Meanwhile his spiritual trials still continued, and his associates little suspected that the man so humiliated and so meanly regarded was he to whom they must look for the accomplishment of the great design now communicated to them, and in which some of them were destined to bear a part.

CHAPTER VIII.

ATTEMPTED SEMINARY AT CHARTRES. REFORM OF LA RÉGRIPPIÈRE COMPLETED. M. OLIER DELIVERED FROM HIS TRIALS.

ONE principal end for which the French Oratory had been instituted was the education of ecclesiastics, but Providence had other designs; and, contrary to the mind and will of the founder, Cardinal de Bérulle, it was employed almost exclusively in the conduct of missions, the performance of parochial duties, and, more than all, in the management of schools. So opposed was this last to the intention of the Cardinal that he would have had the Pope (Paul V.), in his Bull of institution, expressly prohibit the Fathers from connecting themselves with anything of a purely scholastic nature; but no such clause was introduced, and, instead of establishing seminaries for priests, the French Oratorians undertook the direction of numerous schools. So far, indeed, were they from wishing to engage in what their founder intended to be their chief occupation, that they even allowed P. Eudes to leave them rather than second his designs in that direction. In this we cannot but discern the protecting hand of Providence; for, after the death of P. de Condren, the Oratory (as is well known) became one of the strongholds of Jansenism, and, had its members at that time had the education of the clergy in their hands, the greatest evils would have resulted to the whole Church of France. P. de Condren seemed to have a divine intimation of this; for it is very remarkable that, with the strong sense he entertained of the urgent need of ecclesiastical seminaries, he did not engage the members of his own Community in the undertaking, but got together a separate company of priests whom he destined for the work. True it is that at one time (1637) he had a design of founding a seminary at the Abbey of Juilly, in connection with the Oratory, towards which M. Olier contributed, but the institution, in fact, never became anything more than a school.

The little band of priests, now informed as to their true vocation, resolved to abandon the field of missionary labour and, retiring first to Loreau, then to Épernon, in the diocese of Chartres, gave themselves up to prayer and instruction of the people, until Providence should open out a way for the execution of their design. It was now that M. Olier obtained at length some relaxation of his trials, from which, however, he was not entirely delivered until the end of the same year. It was in the cathedral church of Chartres that (to use his own expressions) he first began to breathe interiorly, and to recover that exterior cheerfulness which had been natural to him previously to his afflictions. His companions were astonished at the change, though they little suspected the cause. We have seen that he laboured under a continual dread that all his actions were defiled with a secret pride and self-love. He had been visited with a most vivid perception of the malice of the sin of pride: how it robs God of His glory, and sacrilegiously despoils His altars of that in which He most delights—the adoration of the heart and will; and the sight had filled him with a horrible fear. But on the octave of Corpus Christi, having risen an hour or two earlier than usual and repaired to the cathedral, when the famous bells of Nôtre Dame began to ring out sweetly and solemnly in honour of the Sacramental Mystery, his mind, as by a sudden and divine illumination, apprehended the immense glory which God receives during that great festival, when Jesus is enthroned on a thousand altars and is offered to His Eternal Father in union with the homage of all true believers throughout the world. His soul was transported with joy, and with the joy that he experienced came also the reflection that his heart, too, shared in this universal homage; that it, too, rendered praise and glory to God. The thought seemed to remove a heavy burden from his mind, and he found relief to his feelings of love and devotion in a gush of tears to which he had been long a stranger. From that moment his fears diminished, and gradually departed.

God also was pleased to grant him, in the person of M. Picoté, who was a member of the community, a director in whom he could repose entire confidence and from whom he experienced all the affection and sympathy of a father. This good priest had been deputed, among others, by the King to enquire into the affair of the Loudun possessions. He went with a mind prejudiced rather than otherwise against the reality of the manifestations, but returned per-

fectly convinced. His opinion, it may be added, was shared by M. Meyster and M. de Foix, the former of whom investigated the matter at the instance of the Bishop of Saintes. For some time after, M. Picoté was afflicted with great interior sufferings, which left him no peace night or day. In his distress he sought the aid of M. Laisné de la Marguerie, formerly a Counsellor of State, who, on the death of his wife, had received holy orders. M. Laisné, being a novice in direction, felt that he could render M. Picoté no assistance and took him to Marie Rousseau, in whose spiritual discernment he had the greatest confidence. He was thus the first of the associates to be brought into close relations with Marie Rousseau, and by the help of her prayers he was delivered from his trials. This led him to take other members of the little community to visit that holy woman, simply for the purpose of edification, and she, on her part, made no allusion to the designs of God regarding them. M. Olier, indeed, was not in a condition at the time to discuss such questions, or to engage in any exterior matters at all. But it would appear that at some of these interviews his state was made the subject of conversation between his associates and Marie Rousseau; for in his *Mémoires* he writes, "During the time my trials lasted, when I was forsaken and derided by everybody, and was looked upon as a person who had not only lost his senses but was given over to reprobation, she alone maintained that I was not what they imagined me to be; she and M. Picoté believed me to be in the grace of God." In this good priest, accordingly, M. Olier found one who seemed to be supernaturally enlightened respecting the dispositions of his soul, as though God, who alone knows the secrets of the heart, had communicated them to him, and he was able to entrust to him the conduct of his affairs, temporal and spiritual, without the least reserve.

An amusing instance of the simplicity of this worthy man is related by M. du Ferrier, which, though it occurred at a later date, may be given here. Having gone from Paris to Orleans, of which city he was a native, he was stopped in the Vale of Trois Croix by six mounted highwaymen, who, with the politeness which in that age characterised these gentry, begged he would favour them with his purse. Suspicious of no evil design, M. Picoté no sooner heard the request than he replied, "Willingly, good Sirs, and with all my heart." Then, taking out his purse, in which there were five or six crowns, he emptied the contents into his hand, and, presenting it to them, said, "I wish it was a better one, for your sakes." Half surprised,

half indignant, the men asked him what he meant. "Why," said he, "I thought you asked me for a purse, and here is one at your service." The unaffected simplicity of the reply so delighted them that, bursting out laughing, they said, "The joke is worth all your money; pray, Sir, keep your purse; we have no wish to deprive you of it;" and, so saying, they gallopped off, still laughing with all their might.

The death of P. de Condren might naturally have been expected to be a fresh source of sorrow and distress to M. Olier, but he accepted it in a spirit of perfect resignation: proof, if any were needed, that the interior trials through which he was passing came from God. Thoughtful, however, of others, he wrote to console the Sœur de Vauldray, who was suffering from a bereavement of a much less grievous kind.* "Ah, well, my dear daughter," he said, "if we are to be troubled about every misfortune that happens to us, we shall never have any peace in this world. I will tell you what has befallen myself. My dear father and master has been taken from me by the appointment of the Divine Will, which is our dear mistress both in privation and in abundance, in aridities as much as in sweetest consolations. He it was who aided me so much in applying myself to God, which is what I most value and desire. He it was who encouraged me so much to help you, you yourself in particular, and commended the convent of La Régrippière to my care. He it was from whom I learned so many good and holy things. Ah, well, my sister, is not the Will of God worth as much as that saintly man, who possessed nothing save through the holiness of that Divine Will? Cannot that Will supply all which It has taken away? Can It not do as much good of Itself as It did by means of another? My dear daughter, let us adore the Will of Jesus, let us adore that beloved Master: it is for our sanctification that He permits us to meet with such thorny trials."

* It had been P. de Condren's wish that M. Olier should relinquish the direction of the nuns of La Régrippière, as not being compatible with the work to which he knew that he was destined, and confine himself to writing to them a few times in the year. M. Olier accordingly obeyed, and P. Chauveau, a Jesuit Father, undertook the office of director. But the Sœur de Vauldray, who was unable to reconcile herself to the loss of one whose counsels she felt to be needful to the health of her soul, fell into such a state of darkness and desolation that the Father, fearful of subjecting her to too severe a trial, withdrew his prohibition. From a letter which M. Olier wrote to her, it appears that she had a great repugnance to eating off pewter instead of silver, to which she had been accustomed. This may be taken as significative of the utter secularity in which the community had been sunk.

By the desire of M. de Valencé, Bishop of Chartres, the little band of priests, eight in number, gave a mission to the inhabitants of the town, during which M. Olier preached four or five times on the glories of Mary with all his accustomed power. So great was their success that the Bishop invited them to take up their abode in the city, with a view of conducting the regular retreats provided for the candidates for orders. To this they gladly consented, under the idea that it would gradually lead to the establishment of an ecclesiastical seminary. Accordingly they engaged a house in the parish of Ste. Foi, close to the cathedral, furnished it at their own expense, and took upon themselves the entire support of the candidates as long as the exercises lasted. Their hope was that some of these might be induced to remain with them, in order to being more perfectly instructed in their priestly duties; but nothing of the kind followed. Notwithstanding their charity and zeal, and the edifying example of their lives, not a single individual joined them during the whole eight months they spent at Chartres. The parishioners, moreover, had conceived a prejudice against the undertaking, simply, as it would seem, because it was one with which they were not familiar; but, whatever the cause, the attempt to found a seminary met with no encouragement. Their labours, however, had not been altogether fruitless. M. Olier, struck with the devout behaviour of a youth who was constant in his attendance on the exercises of the mission, took particular pains in instructing him. On the departure of his spiritual master, this pious youth set down in writing all the principal maxims which he had learned from his lips, and drew up a plan of life in accordance therewith, by which he regulated the actions of each day. Thus M. Olier had the happiness of being instrumental in providing the parish of St. Saturnin at Chartres with its celebrated Curé, M. Gilles Marie, whose edifying Life has been given to the world.

Left thus without occupation, these zealous men employed themselves as best they could in the several parishes of the city, until God should more clearly disclose His will to them. M. Olier devoted himself in particular to catechising the children, whose proficiency he rewarded by distributing among them little presents which the Sœur de Vauldray sent him for the purpose. The ill success, however, which had attended their efforts began to produce an unsettled feeling among the associates, and it was soon apparent that the community had arrived at a crisis in its affairs. M. de

Foix and M. du Ferrier, whom business had taken to Paris, were on the point of returning to Chartres, when M. Meyster, who at this time retired from the society, said to them, while at dinner, in a tone of great earnestness, "My dear friends, you are losing your time; you are not doing what God requires of you. He disapproves of your remaining at Chartres, and I am bidden to tell you so." He added that M. Amelote was called to other labours. His words had such effect upon them that, rising from table, they went at once to consult the Fathers of the Oratory at St. Magloire, and, acting on the advice they received, they resolved, instead of returning to Chartres, to proceed on a pilgrimage to Notre Dame des Ardilliers,* near Saumur in Anjou. It was at the same time agreed between them that they should not speak of the matter on the way, but should make it simply the subject of prayer, and leave the issue in the hands of God.

At this juncture † M. Olier also arrived in Paris, before the feast of the Assumption, for the purpose of settling a difference with the Prior of his abbey, whom the monks had, in defiance of all right, just nominated to the office. While there, he received a visit from the Abbess of Fontevrault, Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon, who begged him to repair in person to La Régrippière, with a view to completing the reform which he had so auspiciously commenced. Nothing could be more in accordance with his wishes, and he followed his two friends to Saumur, with the hope of inducing them to accompany him into Brittany. He was especially anxious to have the co-operation of M. du Ferrier, as he relied upon his assistance to effect a conversion in which he had himself entirely failed. It was that of a nun whom he describes as the haughtiest and most self-sufficient in the house, and who had conceived a great aversion to him, either because of his success with the Sœur de Vauldray, who had been the leader of the opposition, or because (as he says) she despised

* This celebrated pilgrimage owed its origin to the following circumstance. A peasant, while digging in a field, found a little image of Notre Dame de Pitié, by which many miracles were wrought. A chapel was built over the spot where it was found, which became much frequented by the faithful. This chapel was served from the year 1616 by the Fathers of the Oratory, to whom it belonged.

† It was about this time (according to M. Faillon) that, on the demise of the Bishop of Le Puy, the Chapter begged the King to nominate M. Olier to the vacant see; in which they were warmly seconded by the very persons who had been the authors of the violent opposition which he encountered during his mission in Auvergne.

what she regarded as want of spirit in him. She it was, in fact, who upheld the rest in their disobedience and disorders. His two friends consented, and they arrived late one October evening at the convent, where they were well received. The Superioress and elder nuns, together with the fourteen whose conversion M. Olier had effected at his first visit, came at once into the parlour. There were two *grilles*, at one of which M. Olier stood, at the other M. de Foix. M. du Ferrier remaining apart and saying nothing, the Sisters called him the "Abbé of silence;" but they were soon to learn that he could speak, and with irresistible effect. That evening M. Olier was seized with one of his fits of timidity, and said to his companions, "Three years ago I had the courage to preach to these religious, and now I protest to you I should not venture to open my mouth." But in the morning, rising an hour before the rest, he took for the subject of his meditation those words of our Lord, "*They shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth*," * of which his mind had been full the evening before, when he was proceeding to the convent. The result was such an accession of strength and light that, when, on his way to say Mass, the Mother Prioress requested him to preach, he at once consented, and delivered himself with so much unction and power that the hearts of all were touched. They who did not yield to grace on that occasion were brought to contrition by a second sermon on the following day, and begged, with many sobs and tears, to be heard in confession.

M. Olier, however, was right in his conjecture that the presence of another priest was needed to effect the conversion of the nun to whom allusion has been made. On the second morning after their arrival, M. du Ferrier, who was about to depart for Clisson, was on his knees before the high altar, preparatory to saying Mass, when the Sœur de la Troche (such was the name of the nun), who had been watching him through the grate, sent the sacristan to beg him to offer the Holy Sacrifice for her intention. Acting on a sudden impulse, M. du Ferrier, who was naturally of an obliging disposition, refused, in a way which, on after-reflection, surprised and confounded him. The sacristan, thinking he had not heard or did not understand the request, repeated it; on which the priest replied, "I tell you I will do nothing of the kind." So stern a refusal, coming from a man whom she regarded as gifted with a divine discernment, struck

* St. John iv. 23.

the Sister with a sort of terror: she thought she was lost beyond repentance and, throwing herself on the floor of her cell, shed a torrent of tears. She then begged one of the nuns who had been converted on the occasion of M. Olier's first visit to procure her an interview with M. du Ferrier; but, finding that he had departed for Clisson, she was seized with such a paroxysm of grief that M. Olier despatched a messenger after him to bring him back to the convent. No sooner had M. du Ferrier returned than the Sœur de la Troche made a public confession of her pride and obstinacy, avowing, to her shame, that hitherto she had encouraged the rest of the religious in the violation of their engagements, but protesting that for the future her only desire was to lead a life of obedience, and to fulfil the obligations of her state in silence and recollection. The others who had still held out followed her example; all insubordination was now at an end: moved by M. du Ferrier's powerful exhortations, they one and all embraced each other, and perfect harmony was restored by a solemn act of reconciliation before the Blessed Sacrament. At the request of the Abbess, to whom a report had been sent of all that had occurred, M. Olier and M. du Ferrier remained for a month at the convent, during which they instructed the nuns in the practice of mental prayer, and in all the duties and requirements of a community life.

One abuse there was which M. Olier now succeeded without difficulty in abolishing. Within the convent domain was a thick wood, in which the nuns were in the habit of walking, and where also there was a pond which afforded them the recreation of fishing; but, strange to say, this wood had no inclosure, so that it was open to sportsmen and other intruders. M. Olier had no wish to deprive the nuns either of their walks or of their fishing, but he insisted on the grounds, which were extensive, being properly inclosed; and this accordingly was done by the erection of a wall, which exists at this day.

This long-desired reform being at last happily effected, the two priests retook their way to Chartres, whither they had been preceded by M. de Foix. In passing through Angers, M. Olier was entertained by M. Gui Lanier, Abbé of Vaux, in Saintonge, a holy and zealous priest, to whose particular charge he committed the convent of La Régrippière. From Angers he repaired to Tours, where, on the 11th of November, he had the satisfaction of assisting at the magnificent ceremonies observed in honour of the great St. Martin,

whom he had always held in singular veneration for his heroic humility and self-abjection. During this journey he was favoured with a greater calm in his soul than he had enjoyed since the commencement of his interior trials. He met with a confessor to whom he could open himself without reserve, and from whom he received such helps and encouragements that all his doubts and obscurities vanished, and he beheld with a clear vision the road along which he was to walk. On reaching Chartres, he found the greatest differences of opinion prevailing among his associates as to the course to be pursued, and it soon became evident to him that a dissolution of the community was impending. M. de Foix strongly urged the necessity of abandoning the establishment at Chartres, as having failed in the object for which it was designed, and to this opinion M. Olier himself inclined; but it was as strongly contested by others of the society. In the midst of these debates M. du Ferrier, after imploring the assistance of the Blessed Virgin in the subterranean chapel of Notre Dame de Chartres, went to consult the Mère Gabrielle, a Carmelitess, sister of P. de Condren. She was under the spiritual direction of M. Amelote, to whose judgment in the matter in question she would naturally defer, but this did not render M. du Ferrier, who placed the greatest reliance on her piety and prudence, less desirous to obtain the benefit of her advice. On learning what P. de Condren had said to him before his death, on the subject of which that great man had never uttered a word to M. Amelote, she replied without hesitation that, if the latter decided on breaking up the establishment, M. du Ferrier might take it as a sign that it was the will of God that he should associate himself with M. de Foix and M. Olier in the endeavour to found an ecclesiastical seminary. The very next day M. Amelote pronounced in favour of a dissolution of the society, and from that moment M. du Ferrier became convinced that this ecclesiastic was destined to have no part in the work of which P. de Condren had spoken. The friends, however, continued to live together in perfect amity and concord until the translation of the Bishop of Chartres to the archbishopric of Rheims determined them to quit the place.

CHAPTER IX.

SEMINARY OF VAUGIRARD. M. OLIER'S STATE OF UNION WITH GOD.

MEANWHILE M. Picoté had gone to Vaugirard, a village in the close neighbourhood of Paris, to assist Marie Luillier, Dame de Villeneuve, who had the superintendence of an establishment the members of which were engaged in the management of schools in country-places. It had been commenced at the suggestion of St. Francis de Sales, who was her director, and with the active co-operation of St. Vincent de Paul; and from the difficulties and trials which the institution had encountered its members had obtained the appellation of the Sisters of the Cross.* Mme. de Villeneuve, like so many other devout persons, had long made the reformation of the clergy the subject of especial prayer; and on hearing from M. Picoté an account of what was passing at Chartres she said at once, "Perhaps our Lord would have you establish yourselves at Vaugirard." M. Picoté would have taken no notice of the remark, but she pursued the subject, representing the facilities and advantages which such a situation offered: its seclusion, and yet its close proximity to the capital; the assistance they would derive from the Curé, M. Copin, who would willingly place the parish church at their disposal; while for herself, she would engage to give them all the aid in her power, even to their entire maintenance, if that were necessary. Her earnestness had its effect on M. Picoté, and, after recommending the matter to God, he wrote to his friends at Chartres, and in particular to M. de Foix. When his letter was read there was but one opinion of its contents, and an immediate answer was returned that the proposition was neither feasible nor reasonable. But on M. de Foix going to Paris, he was induced by M. Picoté to

* Through the exertions of M. Olier, the Sisters of the Cross were established in several towns where he had been engaged in giving missions, in order to perpetuate the benefits which had been derived from the ministrations of himself and his fellow-labourers.

hear what Mme. de Villeneuve had to say on the subject, and her representations, combined with those of M. Picoté, who was now a strenuous advocate of the plan, had the effect of bringing him entirely over to her views. As for M. Amelote, he regarded the whole scheme as a piece of extravagant folly, but, considering that his friends had need of retirement and repose, he advised them to repair to Vaugirard for the good of their health. The jubilee was about to be observed in the parish, and, as there was a lack of confessors, M. Picoté begged M. du Ferrier to come and help him, with the hope of enlisting his services also in the cause he had so much at heart. Mme. de Villeneuve, moreover, availed herself, for the same purpose, of the influence of the Abbé de Pormorant, who, like herself, was devoted to the Christian instruction of youth; but nothing that was said to him had any effect on M. du Ferrier until, while saying Mass in the church, at the moment he communicated he found himself possessed with the conviction that Vaugirard was the place which God had chosen, and that he must abandon himself entirely to the Divine will.

Their next endeavour was to gain over M. Olier, but the attempt did not meet with the success expected. Yielding to the solicitations of his friends, he returned to Paris, but was found to be more entirely opposed to the projected establishment than even they had been, and expressed himself accordingly. At the request, however, of M. Picoté, his director, he consented to commend the matter to God, and in the beginning of December, 1641, retired for that purpose to a country house at Notre Dame des Vertus, near Paris, where M. Picoté continued to visit him. While in this retreat the Lord was pleased to speak to him in vision, after a manner of which he had hitherto had no experience. It was on the 5th or 6th of the same month that, being absorbed in prayer, he seemed to behold in spirit the Eternal Father bearing in his arms a company of ecclesiastics who were the objects of His tenderest care; and at the same moment there rose to his lips, with a significance he had never before realized, those words of David: "*Qui regis Israel, intende; qui deducis velut ovem Joseph*—(Give ear, O Thou that rulest Israel; Thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep)." * He was about to mount his horse and return to Paris, in compliance with a message he had received from his associates, when he was moved (he says) to return to his chamber, and there,

* Psalm lxxix. 1.

casting himself on the floor and abandoning himself without reserve to God, he supplicated an outpouring of His love on those who were to be united with Him in the fulfilment of His designs, and, as in reply to his petition, there came vividly before his mind the words of the Divine Son to His Eternal Father: "*Mea omnia tua sunt, et tua mea sunt*—(All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine)."* He prayed for all with whom he had been associated at Chartres, and offered them one by one to God; and then an interior voice seemed to speak to him, and to tell him that some of these, and in particular M. Amelote, were destined for other spheres of labour. From that moment his course was clear before him.

By this time the community was entirely broken up, and its members were living separately at Paris. M. Olier, encouraged by the heavenly vision, would have re-assembled them for the purpose of laying the foundations of a future seminary, but the failure at Chartres withheld them from making a similar attempt, and especially in a mere village like Vaugirard. Besides, they had not recovered sufficient confidence in M. Olier since his state of trial, and were less disposed than ever to listen to his counsels. The result, therefore, was that, with the exception of M. de Foix and M. du Ferrier, all his old associates withdrew from him, some accompanying M. Amelote, who, while at Chartres, had resolved on quitting the society, to Rouen, where he had been invited to take part in a great mission given by Père Eudes. M. Olier, however, nothing disheartened, lost no time in procuring a house at Vaugirard, near the parish church, and then prepared to enter on his new mode of life by a second retreat at Notre Dame des Vertus, where he had received so many favours. It was a peculiar satisfaction both to himself and to his two associates that their future residence should be in a place especially dedicated to the Blessed Virgin; the church also possessed a miraculous image† of his beloved Patroness, before which it was his daily habit to pray, and he never left the sacred building without first saying an *Ave Maria* at its feet.

With such expedition were all the arrangements completed that they were able to take posssession of their new abode in the beginning of January, 1642. It was a mean-looking building, so small and

* St. John xvii. 10.

† This image was broken to pieces at the Revolution, and local tradition avers that the perpetrator of the sacrilege received a wound in the arm from a splinter of the wood, which long remained unhealed.

inconvenient that, to make room for the ecclesiastics whom they hoped to receive, it was necessary to partition off a few cells in an adjoining dovecot, and even the best apartment in the house scarcely deserved the name. They were but three in number, of whom M. de Foix was regarded as the head, M. Picoté, who was engaged at the establishment of the Sisters of the Cross, not being in a condition to join them; and, as they had exhausted their private resources in the expenses incurred at Chartres, they were obliged to practise the strictest economy. They had no servant, but performed all the offices of the house with their own hands, while for their daily meals they were dependent on the charity of Mme. de Villeneuve, who (as we find from M. du Ferrier) used to send them soup and *bouilli* in a little tureen for their dinner and a few slices of roast mutton for their supper. Their occupations consisted in prayer, the reading of Holy Scripture, and study; they recited the collect of the Blessed Sacrament at the beginning of every conference, and even a portion of the time set apart for recreation was spent in adoration before the Tabernacle. Thus they waited, ignorant of God's intentions, but assured that He had special designs regarding them and prepared simply to fulfil them, whatever they might be.

Nor was it long before God made known His will. Since the death of P. de Condren they had had (properly speaking) no director; but, a few days after taking up their abode at Vaugirard, they placed themselves under the spiritual guidance of one who has been already mentioned, Dom Grégoire Tarrisse, Superior-General of the Benedictines of St. Maur. He was a man of extraordinary virtue and sagacity, and, as such, was held in the highest esteem by some of the greatest personages in France. Though indifferent to all merely human interests, it was under his auspices that the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés became celebrated for the many learned and accomplished writers who in the several departments of literature, science, and art exercised so powerful an influence in their day. And here, with M. Olier, we cannot but admire the watchful care which the good Providence of God exercises over those who simply surrender themselves into His keeping. When first he devoted himself to works of active charity he was given for his director St. Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission; then, when the time arrived that he should be more deeply instructed in all that concerned the interior life, he became a pupil in the school of P. de Condren, who, perhaps, of all men living had the pro-

foundest knowledge of spiritual things; and now, when God would draw him nearer to Himself and admit him to the sweetest caresses of His love, he was favoured with the intimate friendship of this holy Benedictine, who was a very model of prayer, mortification, and detachment from the world. For his own particular director he had another eminent Benedictine, P. Bataille, Procurator-General of the Order, of whom he says that he possessed greater lights for the regulation both of the interior and the exterior life, and a more decided gift for advancing souls in the ways of perfection, than any one he knew.

In his *Mémoires* M. Olier frequently adores the wonderful Providence of God in having brought him and his two associates into such close relations with the very men whose influence and protection were to prove of the utmost importance to them in the work they were chosen to accomplish, though as yet they knew it not,—the reformation of the parish of St. Sulpice and the erection of the Seminary which was to bear its name. The state of that parish was a subject of poignant affliction to Dom Grégoire, and the more so because, endeavour as he might, he was unable to apply an effectual remedy to the frightful scandals which he beheld around him; while P. Bataille was so penetrated with a sense of the outrages which day and night were being perpetrated against the Divine Majesty that he had offered himself as a victim, even to blood, if God required the sacrifice, in reparation of the evil and for its utter extirpation. This devoted servant of God had originally made his religious profession in the Cistercian house at Cluny, but had been attracted to St. Germain's by the great reform of St. Maur, and there he remained until he had witnessed the marvellous transformation which was effected in the parish and the firm establishment therein of the Seminary which was to be the source of infinite blessings to France, when he left the Benedictine community and returned to his former Order; as though (to adopt M. Faillon's words) his mission at St. Germain's had been fulfilled and nothing further remained for him to do. P. Tarrisse, again, departed this life as soon as these great works were accomplished and before the construction of the Seminary had even been commenced. To these men M. Olier was mainly indebted, under God, for the success with which he was enabled to communicate to others the spirit with which he was himself animated, and to surmount the formidable obstacles which his zeal encountered. Indeed, it would seem that

eighteen months before, when his state of humiliation was at its lowest, and he appeared to be abandoned by all, he received a divine intimation that to Dom Grégoire Tarrisse and Dom Hugues Bataille he was to look for guidance and support. How it came about that he and his associates were led to communicate to these religious their design of founding a seminary we are not told, but they were no sooner made acquainted with it than they exhorted them to persevere, assuring them, with a confidence which only the Spirit of God could have imparted, that they were called to do a work which would be of the greatest service to the Church; and in this they were seconded by St. Vincent de Paul and the celebrated Jesuits, PP. Hayneuve and Saint-Jure.

But that which most clearly marked the Divine approbation was the marvellous change which was produced in M. Olier himself. From the moment of his arrival at Vaugirard, not only was he entirely delivered from his afflicting trials, but he was visited with the most consoling proofs of God's love. He experienced that blessed and utterly supernatural effect of Christ's indwelling presence which is accorded only to a few most favoured souls—prepared for so transcendent a boon by first passing through a state of extraordinary humiliation—and of which St. Paul speaks, when he says, "*I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*"* In M. Olier these words were literally fulfilled. His soul, nay, his very body, became the sensible habitation and organ of Jesus Christ moving in him and operating by him; so that he no longer spoke or acted as of himself, but only with the concurrence and by the disposal of Him who lived within him. His state, as he describes it, was now the precise opposite of what it had been in the time of suffering. He felt the presence of the Spirit that ruled him in the exercise of all his natural powers and faculties; not only in his speech and general bearing, but in his very gait and each particular gesture; so that they who beheld him were astonished at the composed, self-possessed demeanour of one whose movements had always displayed a certain precipitancy and absence of control. M. Tronson, in the work entitled *L'Esprit de M. Olier*, thus writes: "The Spirit of our Lord rendered Itself such absolute master of his heart, and took such complete possession of his soul and all his faculties, that It no longer permitted him the slightest movement save in depend-

* Gal. ii. 20.

ence on Itself and with Its concurrence. It showed Itself in his very eyes, his tongue, his hands, making him act, or preventing him from acting, according to Its pleasure." The Spirit of Jesus was the soul of his soul, and the informing, animating principle of his whole life. If he set himself to write, It dictated his words and seemed even to guide his pen. And this presence and influence was abiding and continual. "If I leave It (he writes), It immediately follows me, and again takes possession of me the instant I give myself to It, whether at home or abroad, in action or in repose; whether alone or with others this Divine Spirit is with me everywhere." *

He experienced the same marvellous change also in his mental powers and supernatural gifts. Instead of the darkness and confusion in which his soul had been involved, it was now filled with light; his thoughts were clear and distinct, his tongue unloosed; that distressing dryness from which he had suffered so much was succeeded by an influx of the sweetest spiritual joy, and his mind, no longer occupied with its own miseries, was able to raise itself to God with the utmost facility and the liveliest affection. "I remember," he writes, "that during my trials one consoling thought occurred to me, that if God should deign to make use of me in His service—an event of which I had no expectation—at least it would be plain Who was the agent. My state of abandonment taught me that whatever good we possess is from God alone, and that the absence of it is all that is our own. What I now possess is not my own property, it does not belong to my soul; it is a grace, a mercy, for which I did not look, and of which I am utterly unworthy. Then I was wholly without direction, whether interior or, I might almost say, exterior; now the goodness of God gives me all the counsel I can desire. If two things presented themselves for me to do I had no power of deciding, there was nothing to determine my choice; now I am scarcely ever at a loss. I am guided interiorly like a child tended by a father of consummate wisdom and perfect goodness. This takes place in the depth of my soul by a divine operation inexpressibly delicate, and which the devil cannot counterfeit. Sometimes

* This statement has nothing in common with the doctrine of the false mystics, as if it were meant that the soul, in such a state of union, loses its liberty of action, and consequently can no longer sin, even venially, and is incapable of falling from grace. In the case of M. Olier himself the extraordinary aids of the Holy Spirit, although habitual, were not always available, and were sometimes suddenly withdrawn. The true Catholic doctrine will be found explained at length in the *Catéchisme Spirituel* of P. Surin, Part 1, chap. iii.

it is a movement, sometimes a voiceless word, making itself heard more distinctly than any utterance. For God, who is the Word, renders Himself more sensible to our souls than man can do by articulate speech. O Divine Substance, who art word, light, power, love, O Divine Being, be Thou praised, exalted, and blessed for ever!"

This supernatural assistance of the Holy Spirit became more constant from the day on which he made himself by solemn vow the servant of Jesus Christ, abandoning himself without recall to be at His entire disposal, with an utter dependence on His Spirit in mind and body, even to the smallest things. The first time he felt a desire to take this servitude upon him was during his state of suffering, and especially within the octave of the Epiphany, 1641, three days after the death of P. de Condren, who had made the same vow, although M. Olier was not aware of the fact. His confessor, however, had advised him to wait a year, and it was not until the January of 1642, shortly after his arrival at Vaugirard, and on the very day on which he and his associates took P. Tarrisse for their spiritual guide, that he made the irrevocable engagement. "From the moment I made this vow," he writes, "I have been able neither to speak nor even to think of God save in dependence on the Spirit of my Master, who possesses me and applies my soul to what He wills. Heretofore I believed such a state of subjection well-nigh impossible. It is the Spirit of my Master alone which now enables me to practise it, and, although this dependence is universal and unceasing, it is nevertheless full of peace and sweetness. This, indeed, is a true characteristic of the Spirit of God, which, great as It is, accommodates Itself to things so mean as the guidance of a vile and miserable sinner. The vow of servitude to the Spirit of Jesus demands likewise an absolute confidence and an abandonment without reserve into the hands of this blessed and faithful Master, who is all-wise, all-powerful, all-good, and who by His perfections supplies for our blindness, our weakness, and our self-love, which too often, alas! are the directors we consult. . . . Blessed are the rebuffs which produce such sweet caresses! If the world knew how sweet His service is, if it only knew Him, all would follow after Him. O my good Master, make Thyself known and loved; make others taste how sweet and lovable Thou art."

Such were the extraordinary ways by which it pleased the Holy Spirit to lead this favoured soul. God, who desired to pour down

upon him the abundance of His graces, would have him on his part set no bounds to his generosity and devotion. He had chosen him for the high office of sanctifying those who were called to minister at His altars, and it was His will that he should have experience of the extraordinary operations of His love, in order that he might be able to bring others, each according to the measure of his grace, to a state of union with His dear Son, albeit after a simpler and more common manner.

The "three Solitaries of Vaugirard" (as they were called), never for a moment doubting the designs of God, had no sooner entered their retreat than they proceeded to consecrate themselves to His service and form themselves into a community. As the end which they proposed to themselves was to promote the glory of the Most Holy Trinity by means of the sacerdotal order, they desired to take as their only bond of union the ineffable love of the Three Divine Persons. In this they followed the counsels of P. de Condren, who had forbidden their binding themselves by any vow. In furtherance of their design they resolved to go together on a pilgrimage to Montmartre, and there solemnly consecrate themselves to the work to which they believed they had been called. The form of consecration, which was approved by P. Bataille, ran thus: "Three priests, feeling themselves called in the unity of the Spirit to the service of God and His Holy Church, to form for Him ministers who may worthily promote His glory, honour His Son Jesus Christ, and love His members, have resolved, in honour of the Divine Society of the Three Persons, indivisible by the unity of Their essence and Their holy love, to bind themselves by a sacred promise never to abandon or to depart from the design which it has pleased God to manifest to them and even to confirm by numerous signs. If any one among them should deem himself called by the goodness of God to serve Him apart from the others, he shall be free to do so only with their mutual agreement and consent. This it is which they desire to promise, in the presence of the three martyrs, St. Denis, St. Rusticus, and St. Eleutherius, devoting and consecrating themselves, after the pattern of the same blessed martyrs, as living victims, to the honour of the Most Holy Trinity, the glory of Jesus Christ, and the exaltation of His Church."

It had been the constant prayer of M. Bourdoise that three priests might be given to the Church who, in honour of the Three Divine Persons, would unite to raise the sacerdotal order in France from

the degradation into which it had sunk; and now, unknown to himself, his prayer had been fulfilled. Hearing, therefore, that M. Olier and his two friends had established themselves at Vaugirard, he wrote to them in the following terms: "Oh, that God would give us three faithful men whose sole aim it should be to do His will, and in His own way! Oh, that there were found three priests so filled with love for the Church as to be willing to trust her in all those rules which have been dictated to her by the Holy Ghost, and to espouse her cause against the world and all its customs; three priests who, when the rules of the Church are put before them, will not reply, 'This is not the custom; we do otherwise. What would people say?—they would laugh at us. Let us leave things as we find them; we are not wiser than those who have gone before us.'" And then from that narrow house at Vaugirard there came a reply after his own heart: "Come here, and you will find three such priests as you are looking for, if only you will teach them the things which the Holy Church has ruled. Nor custom nor aught else shall prevent those rules being faithfully obeyed, with the help of God's grace, which we entreat you to ask Him to give us."

Accordingly, M. Bourdoise went to see his friends at Vaugirard, and many, doubtless, were the pious witticisms in which he indulged relative to the dovecot and its expected occupants, as he shared the contents of Madame de Villeneuve's little tureen. The house and all its arrangements—no servants and an empty larder—with a plenteous allowance of prayer and meditation, must have been thoroughly to his taste. Good advice, too, we may be assured, was liberally bestowed, and that in the plainest and often not the most complimentary terms. "We admired the dealings of God with him," says M. du Ferrier, "in that off-hand bluffness which was natural to him, but we tried to conduct ourselves with a little more graciousness of manner." M. Bourdoise, however, was a thoroughly practical man, and the three weeks he spent with his friends were employed in giving them instructions in all that concerned the ecclesiastical regimen, down to the smallest minutiæ of chants, rubrics, and ceremonies, with explicit directions as to their personal attire, the wearing of their hair, and their demeanour and conversation generally. His opinion was that they should occupy themselves very little with the spiritual direction of women, but apply their whole energies to the forming of ecclesiastics. His zeal and his firmness continued to be of the utmost service to the young associates; he put into their

hands from time to time certain manuscript treatises which he had composed for the use of priests living in community, and never ceased to testify towards them on all occasions the sincerest friendship and esteem.

But the person from whom they received the greatest assistance and support was Marie Rousseau, to whose prayers and lights they had never ceased to have recourse in all their doubts and discouragements. "This poor woman," writes M. Olier, "though of low extraction, and of a condition in life which it is almost a disgrace to name, is nevertheless become the adviser of persons the most illustrious by birth and rank, and the guide of souls the most exalted in virtue. Even princesses have recourse to her counsels, and recommend their most important affairs to her prayers. The Duchesse d'Orléans, the Princesse de Condé, the Duchesses d'Aiguillon and d'Elbeuf, the Maréchale de la Châtre, and many others count it an honour to visit her; indeed, I have known a lady of the highest rank afraid of even going into her presence. Souls the most advanced in the ways of God seek lessons of perfection from her lips; men of the most Apostolic spirit go to consult her before entering on any enterprise which they have in contemplation. P. Eudes, that famous preacher, the wonder of our age; P. de Condren, General of the Oratory; Mlle. Manse, raised up by God to lend her fostering care to the infant Church of Canada; M. le Royer de la Dauversière, to whom that Church owed its first establishment; M. du Coudray, devoted to the missions of the Levant and the defence of Christendom against the Turks; Dom Jacques, the Carthusian, the bold rebuker of vice in the wealthy and the powerful,—when these, and so many others of the most zealous servants of God who at this day adorn the Church of France—statesmen and magistrates, including the Chancellor Séguier—are to be seen seeking counsel of this wise and holy woman, we might think we beheld the 'Virgin most prudent' once more directing the Church of her Divine Son and guiding His Apostles after His Ascension into heaven. Such is the influence she exerts over the hearts of men that in a moment they are completely changed; there is none so holy but in conversing with her he derives fresh courage for God's service and the salvation of his neighbour; persons the most eminent for their sanctity have experienced the most surprising effects; and all from a few simple, common words. When consulted, her replies are short; she never enters into her reasons for the advice she gives;

she does but say, 'God would have you do this or that.' Sometimes she gives advice contrary to that of men most enlightened with the wisdom of God, without being able to explain the reasons for her replies, and mature consideration has invariably brought them to acquiesce in her judgment. In her would seem to be visibly displayed the absolute power of God; she has but to speak, and at a word all that she asks or wishes is done; and that without any of those exterior advantages of appearance, address, or manner by which such influence is usually accompanied."

This holy woman had abstained, in obedience to her director, P. Bataille, from disclosing to the disciples of P. de Condren the lights she had received in prayer as to God's designs regarding them. But the subject was never absent from her thoughts; it was the one absorbing interest of her life, and she was always labouring to promote it. As we have said, she had been among the very few who retained their high esteem for M. Olier at the time he was contemned by all the world; and when, after his retirement to Vaugirard, God restored to him all his former powers, she never rested until she had disabused the minds of his late associates and once more collected them about him. She sought out each singly, and urged him to go and judge for himself whether the Abbé Olier were such as he had come to regard him. Several accordingly went, and when they saw and heard him they could not disguise their astonishment. It was but a few weeks ago that they had seen him stand dumfounded in the pulpit when desired to address the people, and now they heard him expounding the mysteries of the faith in language so sublime, and with so much authority and command, that it was with difficulty they recognized him as the same person, saying one to another, "Oh, what a change is here! the hand of the Most High is manifest; never man spake more eloquently of the things of God!" Those among them especially who had been disciples of P. de Condren seemed to find again in this lately despised priest the lights, the wisdom, and the virtues of their holy master, and they could not refrain from loudly testifying their astonishment and delight even to M. Olier himself. "I am confounded," he writes, "when I think of it: that I, a vile worm of the earth, so mean and despicable that I wonder I dare make my appearance before the world, should be listened to with surprise and admiration by those to whom but yesterday I was the object of contempt and ridicule But well may they be surprised, for I am amazed at myself, knowing

as I do my ignorance and dulness, and so long assured as I have been, in the mercy of God, of my own blindness and utter nothingness. And yet it is true I have no difficulties on any subject; on the contrary, I receive the clearest lights respecting truths of which I had never so much as heard, and of which the greatest theologians amongst us are astonished they should have remained in ignorance, in spite of all their science. It is now that I behold accomplished the promise of the deceased Father-General, that I should be one of the inheritors of his spirit. I cannot doubt it: things which I heard him formerly say, and which at the time I was incapable of comprehending, are now laid open before me with a clearness exceeding the brightness of the sun."

Providence, too, in a marvellous way gave Its approval to the new institution; and that so notably, that men were constrained to confess that God was there. Every day M. Olier saw visibly fulfilled before his eyes the intimation conveyed in those words which had been so forcibly presented to his mind during his retreat at Notre Dame des Vertus: "*Mea omnia tua sunt, et tua mea sunt.*" His tongue seemed to possess a wonderfully persuasive power; nay, he no sooner even wished a thing than it was done. Conferring one day with his colleagues—and it was the first time that the subject had been mooted—on the need they had of a practical man of business who could transact their temporal affairs for them, at the very moment he was speaking, there came a rap at the door, and he beheld standing before him the very person whose help they needed, who had come to offer himself to the community, to assist them in any way they might require. "I declare," he says, "that never in my life was I more confounded or more amazed at the goodness of God than at that moment. I could not restrain my tears, and in spirit annihilated myself before the Divine mercy." Then, too, began to be realized those other words which had risen to his lips when he had beheld in vision the Eternal Father: "*Qui regis Israel, intende; qui deducis velut ovem Joseph.*" All the tenderest care and nurture which a parent could bestow upon his children was sensibly lavished upon him and his associates; their wants were supplied with a bountifulness and a loving solicitude which was even in advance and in excess of their requests or desires. All things seemed to work together for their good; the services they received from others, so far from being rendered grudgingly and as of constraint, were offered from a motive of charity and out of the abun-

dance of the heart; and they who lately had held aloof from him now seemed to find their satisfaction in heaping kindnesses upon him. His father had left a lawsuit on his hands, which (as usual in such matters) appeared interminable. His opponents had refused all accommodation, when one day, to his surprise, they begged him to forego further proceedings, and yielded all his demands.

Gradually also new members began to offer themselves to the little community. How one of these was gained we learn from M. Olier himself. They had need of an accomplished theologian, and the matter had been made the subject of their united prayers. Now, it happened one day when he and M. de Foix were on their way back from Paris, that they met an ecclesiastic of high repute for his theological science, who had been to see them at Vaugirard, and was returning. M. Olier, in his humility, stepped a little aside, to allow M. de Foix (who at that time was superior) to speak to one whom he knew to be a person of no ordinary ability. But M. de Foix obliged him to come forward, and, against his will, M. Olier found himself drawn little by little into the conversation. Then, abandoning himself (as he says) to the Spirit who ruled him, and speaking the words that were put into his mouth, he gave utterance to thoughts so high and holy, and expressed himself with so much energy and command, that the ecclesiastic was moved in an extraordinary way. M. de Foix himself was equally astonished at his companion's eloquence and at the effect it produced. Indeed, as M. Olier avers, no one was more surprised than himself; but, he adds, "the Divine Spirit hides Himself in what is meanest and most abject, to show that the creature has no part in His works, seeing that He operates them by instruments so incompetent and so contemptible." The result was that the ecclesiastic in question, whose name is not mentioned, but who proved to be the very person of whom they stood most in need, joined the community, and for several years taught theology and philosophy to the inmates of the Seminary.

About this time also the attractions of the same marvellous grace drew to the community another ecclesiastic who, though not possessed of equal theological science, was remarkably well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, and had an extensive and accurate knowledge of all that related to the duties of the ministry. This was M. de Bassancourt, already known to the reader as one of M. Olier's early associates, and a man of considerable powers. After the dissolution of the community of Chartres he had accompanied M. Amelote on

his mission into Normandy, and on his return to Paris lost no time in paying his friends a visit at Vaugirard. They had felt the want of him, at least they had a great wish that he should join them—for (says M. Olier) "we wanted only God"—but they had small hope of winning him, knowing how strongly he was attached to M. Amelote. Nothing, indeed, was further from his own thoughts. He went to see them simply for old affection's sake, and almost for the amusement of the thing, and began by rallying them in a good-natured, humorous way on the wonderful reform they were about to effect in the clergy, settled down as they were, like so many hermits, in that obscure little village. But after he had listened a while to M. Olier his manner completely changed, and he said, "My friends, I am convinced that I shall be more sure of finding our Blessed Lord among you than in my mother's house. No, it is not among their relatives that ecclesiastics are visited by His Spirit. My choice is made; I pray you give me a cell, and let me stay with you." Then, aware that the house was full and seeing the dovecot at the back, he begged them to let him occupy it. "You may do as you please," he said in his usual lively manner, "but go back to my mother I declare I will not: I sleep here to-night." They took him at his word, called a conference immediately, and then they told him he was their friend, their brother, and they could not deny him a request made with such a grace.

This resolution on the part of M. de Bassancourt created much sensation at Paris, where his family were held in high consideration, but the public attention was even more arrested by what next followed. M. Amelote himself paid a visit to Vaugirard and desired to be admitted into the community. This was the occasion of much embarrassment to M. Olier and his colleagues. On the one hand they were reluctant to exclude an old associate of whose virtues and abilities they had so intimate a knowledge, but, on the other, they were convinced, from what both M. du Ferrier and M. Meyster had said, that he did not possess the requisite vocation. Such, therefore, was the answer they returned. M. Amelote, however, was not so easily repelled, and renewed his solicitations with redoubled vigour, pressing his suit more particularly on M. Olier, who (as we shall see) shortly became superior. There was no one for whom the servant of God entertained a warmer admiration, nor had the words of P. de Condren lost any of their effect with him, when, on occasion of his appearing to him after his death, he told him that M. Amelote was

one of the two persons whom together with himself he had left inheritors of his spirit. But neither had he forgotten that interior voice which, in his retreat at Notre Dame des Vertus, had assured him that this ecclesiastic was destined to serve God elsewhere. Nothing, therefore, could shake his resolution. M. de Bassancourt was most urgent in his friend's behalf, offering to endow the seminary with an income of 4,000 livres if he were received among them. Mme. de Brienne, also, wife of the statesman of that name and one of M. Amelote's penitents, persevered for three years in repeating the same request, even engaging the Queen Regent to use her influence in the matter; but all to no purpose. M. Olier was willing to endure any amount of obloquy rather than go against what he believed to be the will of God; and, in fact, his refusal to receive an ecclesiastic of such undoubted merit was made the subject of many injurious remarks, certain ill-natured persons not scrupling to aver that it was founded on a jealous fear of having a rival in the community. M. Olier held his peace, never disclosing to any one except to his director, and that under obedience, the motives which determined him in his opposition; for he could not have done so without at the same time making known the divine illuminations with which he had been favoured. His conduct was justified by the event. The institution in which M. Amelote was called to labour for the glory of God was that of the Oratory, which he entered eight years later, and where he contributed more than any one to uphold the doctrines of the Church against the pestilential errors with which, unhappily, the greater part of that Congregation became infected. At the request of the French clergy, he published a version of the New Testament in opposition to that of Mons, 100,000 copies of which were distributed by the order of Louis XIV. He also composed several treatises against the Jansenistic heresy; among others a *Defence of the Apostolical Constitutions*, and a *Treatise on Grace*, in support of the condemnation of the five propositions. His attachment to the faith and the persecutions he underwent in its defence endeared him still more to M. Olier, with whom, and with the community generally, he continued till the day of his death bound in the closest ties of friendship.*

M. de Bassancourt was followed by M. Houmain, more commonly known as M. de Sainte-Marie from the name of his priory, an ecclesi-

* M. Amelote wrote a Life of Père de Condren and also of Sœur Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement.

astic of great merit and talents. He was of a good family, and being of a delicate constitution, had been so daintily nurtured that before joining M. Olier in the missions he was afraid of the slightest exposure to cold or damp. His room was matted and carpeted, and furnished with double hangings of cloth and paper. But no sooner had he embraced the laborious life to which God had called him than his health seemed to undergo a complete transformation ; he slept on the ground like the rest, and bade adieu for ever to all his self-indulgent ways. He had been a witness of the humiliations which M. Olier had endured during his time of trial, and on visiting him at Vaugirard, he was so moved by his words that he resolved not to leave him.

CHAPTER X.

SPIRIT OF THE SEMINARY OF VAUGIRARD. M. OLIER'S INSTRUCTIONS AND PERSONAL INFLUENCE.

THE three priests had been but a short time at Vaugirard when Cardinal de Richelieu, hearing of the new establishment and surmising that its originators, with whose merits and—what was of no small importance in his eyes—whose high connections he was well acquainted, were among those to whom P. de Condren had alluded in conversation as destined to render great services to the Church, sent his niece, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, to pay them a visit in his name. He had it in contemplation to lay the foundations of a general Episcopal seminary, and in his own mind had fixed upon M. Olier and his associates as the men whom he wished to employ in the execution of his plans. He commissioned his niece, therefore, to express to them his regret that they should be so ill accommodated in their present dwelling, and to offer them his own château of Ruel, where they should be at liberty to live in as complete retirement as they pleased; engaging at the same time to assist their undertaking with all his personal influence and the whole weight of the royal authority. So gracious an offer was received with all the respect and gratitude it deserved, and, had they not been resolved to rest on no other support but that of God alone, they might have recognized in this proposal of the great statesman a providential dispensation in their favour. But they desired to have no human patron, and begged the Duchess to represent with all humility to the Cardinal that, having fixed upon the village of Vaugirard as the place where they could insure the greatest seclusion, they should find it difficult to follow their vocation in the house of a prime minister; and that the meanness of their dwelling rendered it only the more suitable to their purpose.

The Cardinal, far from manifesting displeasure at such a reply,* sought only how to give them further proofs of his confidence and respect, particularly in regard to M. Olier, who was now their recognized head. At first, as was said, M. de Foix had acted as superior of the little community, but he soon insisted on resigning his office, and M. Olier, on whom God had plainly set the seal of His approval, was with one voice elected in his room. The credit which his conduct in this matter had gained him at Court, and the estimation in which he was held by the powerful minister, attracted public attention to him and his associates, and many young ecclesiastics of merit were led to join them. The first to be received at Vaugirard were M. Louis-Henri de Pardaillan de Gondrin, then in his twenty-third

* In the *Mémoires* of M. du Ferrier we have an anecdote of this great man which may surprise those who know him only as the astute politician or iron-handed statesman. M. Meyster, after paying a visit to his friends at Vaugirard, went to see the Cardinal, who for several years had desired to converse with so eminent a missionary. On this occasion he offered M. Meyster more than a million livres for the use of the missions, and, to his astonishment, met with a decided refusal. A circumstance so unexpected deeply moved him, and even filled him with alarm. "But, Monsieur," he said, "has God revealed to you that I am reprobate, and that He will not accept anything at my hands? Tell me, I pray you, do you think that I cannot be saved in the position I occupy?" "My lord," replied M. Meyster, "we have spoken on the subject several times with P. de Condren." "And what conclusion did you come to?" asked the Cardinal. "We were agreed," was the reply, "that you had at your command one means of making sure your salvation, and that was the power of upholding the rights of the Church and procuring the nomination of good men to bishoprics." "I declare to you," said the Cardinal, "that I am so entirely of this sentiment that I never dream of selecting any but the most worthy and most capable men, without regard to the solicitations or the services of relatives. I know of how momentous a nature the matter is, and am convinced that a man would incur damnation who should nominate to a benefice out of consideration for friends, or on account of services rendered by relatives, as much as if he were to sell it to the highest bidder." And, in fact, to this great minister was due the alteration that was made in the briefs of nomination to bishoprics and abbeys. He cancelled the following words which before had been inserted: "*Et pour reconnaître les bons et agréables services rendus*—And in acknowledgment of good and acceptable services rendered."

Truth, however, compels us to add that, notwithstanding this protestation, the Cardinal had taken care to provide himself with the abbeys of Citeaux and Cluny, and nearly all the great abbeys of France; and that, in direct violation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, which had forbidden that any of the principal abbeys of an Order should be held *in commendam* (Comte de Montalembert:—*Les Moines d'Occident; Introduction*, p. clxvi.) It may be that he considered himself an exception to the rule, as being "the most worthy and most capable" man in the kingdom.

year, who two years later was promoted to the Coadjutorship of Sens,* and M. Gabriel de Thubières de Queylus (or Caylus), Abbé of Loc-Dieu, who was afterwards one of M. Olier's most distinguished colleagues. These were followed by M. Pierre de la Chassaigne, Provost of the Chapter of Brioude, who entered the Society early in the year 1642. The next was one of whom we shall have frequent mention in this memoir, M. Antoine Raguier de Poussé. He was the intimate friend of M. de Gondrin, and the account which the latter gave of the sanctity of M. Olier and his great spiritual discernment inspired him with a strong desire to see so extraordinary a man. Accordingly, he went to Vaugirard, and a few minutes' conversation with the servant of God sufficed to lead him to beg with all earnestness to be admitted among his disciples. To these were soon added M. d'Hurtevent, who died Superior of the Seminary of St. Irénée at Lyons, M. de Cambiac, brother of M. du Ferrier, and several others. All these had concluded their studies in letters and philosophy, and had arrived at an age which enabled the directors to judge of their vocation: such being the express conditions which P. de Condren had prescribed in the instructions which he gave to M. du Ferrier before he died.

The community, which had consisted at first of only three individuals, now numbered twenty † members, but the Providence of God had not failed to provide them with an adequate dwelling. Indeed, in nothing was the munificence of the Master whom they served more conspicuously displayed than in what occurred in this matter of a habitation. M. Olier and his associates were not destined to be long confined to the narrow and incommodious building which they had chosen on first coming to Vaugirard. They had been but a few days in the village when M. Copin, the Curé, requested them to take charge of the parish for a fortnight during his absence in Paris; an absence, however, which was prolonged to a space of nine months. This circumstance not only placed another house at their disposal, but was providentially so ordered as to afford them ample opportunity for giving the younger ecclesiastics a thorough, experimental knowledge of the duties of a parish priest, including preach-

* Sad to relate, M. de Gondrin was dismissed from the Seminary, for reasons which will hereafter appear (P. iii. C. 1.) and, on succeeding to the see of Sens, became an ardent supporter of the Jansenists.

† Including, that is, M. du Ferrier, who acted as parish priest in the absence of the Curé, M. Copin, and M. Picoté, who was still engaged in assisting Mme. de Villeneuve in the management of her institution.

ing and catechising. Their next piece of good fortune was far more remarkable. Near to the church stood a large house with an extensive garden, surrounded by a wall newly constructed. Finding that the tenant, who was an official in the royal stables, never resided in it, they proposed that he should sublet it to them. This, however, he declined to do, but insisted on their taking up their abode in it, all furnished as it was, merely stipulating that he should be permitted sometimes to come and say his rosary in the garden alleys. The house belonged to M. de Rochefort, Seigneur of Souplainville and Grand-Vicar of the Archbishop of Auch, where he resided; and, as it was very commodious and in all respects suitable to a large community, they made overtures to him for the purchase of it. But here again they were met with a refusal, the good man protesting he would not let them have it at any price, and begging them to accept it as a gift. This, however, they absolutely refused to do; and, as he saw the uselessness of persisting, he affected acquiescence, and made over to them the house with all its appurtenances, which comprised several acres of vineyard and meadow-land, for the nominal sum of two thousand crowns, the land alone being fully worth the price. And then, when they proceeded to pay the purchase-money, he would not accept it, declaring that, as he had bequeathed them the amount in his will, he preferred leaving it in their hands, without charging them interest.*

They had now, therefore, two establishments. Some of the community remained at the presbytery for the discharge of parochial duties, the rest took up their residence at the house of M. de Rochefort, where they conducted all their spiritual exercises with the utmost regularity. They began, in fact, to put in practice the

* On the 18th of March, 1643, M. Olier and M. de Foix bought the house adjoining that of M. de Rochefort, but the contract of sale was not concluded with M. de Rochefort himself till July 4th in the same year. On the 2nd of March, 1696, a third tenement was added, and the three buildings, united subsequently into one, formed the Little Seminary of St. Sulpice until the year 1759, when it was occupied by a community of poor scholars, called the Robertins. In 1653 the lands were sold by M. Olier for 5,000 livres. At the Revolution the house was seized as national property, and in part demolished. M. Emery, however, who was the ninth Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, made great personal sacrifices in order to re-purchase it; and there at this day may be seen the chamber occupied by M. Olier, now converted into a chapel. It subsequently became the property of the Jesuit Fathers, who placed an inscription under the bust of M. Olier commemorative of his having there commenced the Seminary and Community of St. Sulpice.

principal rules which were afterwards observed both at St. Sulpice and in the seminaries established in the provinces. Thus, every evening the seminarists were given their subjects for mental prayer, and every morning they spent an hour in making it. In the afternoon there was a conference on Holy Scripture, at which the directors, unless otherwise employed, were invariably present, a custom which continued to be followed at St. Sulpice. M. Olier was usually the principal expounder, and the profundity of his theological knowledge, together with the profound insight into the meaning of the Sacred Writings of which he now gave evidence, struck all who heard him with astonishment; so that they who but lately had acted as his instructors voluntarily placed themselves in the ranks of his disciples. In all this the humility of the servant of God became only the more apparent, while his rightful position as head of the community was more indisputably recognised. "My greatest joy," he wrote at the time, "is to see that every one is persuaded that what I say is not of myself, but of God only. I rejoice thereat, and I rejoice the more in perceiving that of all that is done in our little community nothing is ascribed to any one of us, but God alone is acknowledged as doing all things here. There is not one among us who can give the world occasion to say, 'He did this or that.' Blessed be God, who would alone be glorified in His own work! Sometimes I see my nothingness and that of the whole company in a light so full and clear, I am so convinced of my incapacity and my powerlessness to do anything for God, that I feel as if all were lost, as if the whole society were going to ruin, because there is nothing in us which can enable us to endure a moment longer. These convictions of our nothingness, filling me with distrust of ourselves, make me look to God as the only preserver of our society at every instant of its existence."

M. Olier had been forewarned as to the opposition which the new institution would have to encounter, and that to God alone must he look for succour and support; indeed, it might have been expected that an undertaking begun simply from supernatural motives and on supernatural grounds would not command general confidence and respect, even among good men. Why (it was said) abandon the field of missionary labour, in which so much had incontestably been accomplished, for the sake of an uncertain and speculative good which experience had proved to be unattainable? Many also who at first had evinced a warm interest in the work disapproved of M.

Olier's measures, and augured ill of its success. Others, who were admirers of his zeal and abilities, and had expected great things from him, protested loudly against the infatuation which led him to bury his talents in retirement and obscurity. The Grand-Vicar of the Archbishop of Paris, when M. Olier paid him a visit, gravely proposed that he should establish himself at Rome, and there inaugurate an institution which should extend itself throughout the Church. "St. Peter and St. Paul," said he, "did not remain shut up in Judea, —they went to Rome; and thither also ought you to go. Yes, I repeat it, you must go to Rome; indeed you must. Now attend to what I have said." In such an address voice and manner are everything, and the reader will be at no loss to supply them. "This speech," says M. Olier, "surprised me not a little, as coming from such a person and delivered with so much assurance;" but it had no other effect upon him.

At the root, however, of all these objections and counter-suggestions lay the fact that every endeavour hitherto to found an ecclesiastical seminary in France had proved a failure. Eighty years had now elapsed since the Council of Trent enjoined the erection of seminaries for the education of the clergy; many provincial councils at different times had repeated the injunction; and yet nothing had been done. In some dioceses the chapters had refused to move in the matter; in others the injunction had simply been disregarded, or the question had been left pending. By dint of repeated remonstrance and entreaty M. Bourdoise, the Doctor Duval, and some others had succeeded, in 1625, in bringing the subject before the General Assembly of the Clergy, and it was proposed to establish four seminaries for the whole of France; but, although the proposition met with a favourable reception, it appeared in the end so difficult of execution that it was judged better to leave each bishop at liberty to provide for his own diocese in such way as seemed to him most advantageous. The question was what form should be given to the seminaries, and to whom the government should be confided. It had been the intention of the Council of Trent, as also of those provincial councils in which the subject was discussed, that the candidates for the ecclesiastical state should be received into the seminaries at an early age; but whether the selection of subjects had been unfortunate, or those who undertook their direction were wanting in the necessary qualifications, the institutions had either become extinct or had degenerated into mere schools.

St. Vincent de Paul, indeed, in the year 1636 had established a seminary at the Collége des-Bons-Enfants, but even he was forced to confess that, owing to the youths being admitted before their character was sufficiently pronounced, the experiment had resulted in no permanent advantage to the Church. From the same high authority we learn that other attempts had met with no better success; that the seminaries of Bordeaux, Agen, and Rheims were deserted, and that the Archbishop of Rouen had failed in realizing half a dozen vocations out of all the numerous young men on whom he had expended so much labour and care. To which it may be added that the seminary founded by M. de Ventadour in the diocese of Limoges had not produced a single priest during the whole twenty years it was in existence.

The Oratorians (as mentioned in a previous chapter) had been equally unsuccessful. Their house at Paris (formerly the Abbey of St. Magloire), which twenty-two years before had been erected into a diocesan seminary, had not fulfilled its object, and they had found themselves obliged to confine their exertions to giving lessons in theology to such of the pupils in their schools as were intended for the ecclesiastical state, and providing them with a retreat of ten days previous to ordination; which was all that bishops the most remarkable for their zeal were able to accomplish. Even M. Bourdoise, who for more than thirty years had devoted all his energies to supplying the crying need of the Church, had succeeded only in forming a community of parish priests at St. Nicolas du Chardonnet;* and when to these we add such prelates at St. Francis de Sales and M. Alain de Solminihac, Bishop of Cahors, each of whom had made the attempt and had failed, we cannot be surprised that, on M. Olier and his associates commencing their establishment at Vaugirard, it should be regarded as a mere chimerical undertaking.

The remarkable success, however, which attended the new institution speedily led to an entire change of opinion, and it began

* M. Bourdoise and the ecclesiastics associated with him long remained without any fixed abode, and their poverty was so great that they wanted even the most ordinary pieces of furniture, making the shutters of their windows serve them for tables during the day. Cardinal de Retz employed them in instructing the younger clergy to say Mass, manage schools, &c.; and the Bishops of Beauvais and Laon also commissioned M. Bourdoise to take the direction of ecclesiastics belonging to their dioceses while resident at Paris. The Community of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet was incorporated in the year 1631, but it was not until the 20th of April, 1644, that it was erected into a Seminary.

to be acknowledged on all hands that, if any one were able to carry into execution a work which hitherto had appeared impossible of accomplishment, M. Olier was the man. And, in fact, to him belongs of right the title of the founder of the first seminary ever erected in the land of his birth, if by founder be meant one who succeeds in maintaining what he has established.* In this was fulfilled the prediction of the Mère Agnès de Jésus, when (at their first interview) she assured him that God had destined him to lay the first foundations of ecclesiastical seminaries in France. True it is that St. Vincent de Paul had made a beginning, but, by his own confession, that beginning had no permanent results. However, he was not to linger long in the rear; for in this same year, 1642, with the approbation and assistance of Cardinal de Richelieu, who gave him a thousand crowns for the work, he made his first essay in establishing a greater seminary, by admitting twelve young men into the Collége des Bons Enfants. Shortly after, the same great statesman encouraged P. Bourgoing, General of the Oratory, to commence three seminaries of the same kind,—one at Toulouse, a second at Rouen, and a third at Paris; but the first did not last more than a year, the second was not of much longer duration, and the third had scarcely been opened when the Cardinal died, before he had provided the necessary funds for its support.

But to return to M. Olier at Vaugirard. The foundations which it was his design to lay were such as should be sunk deep in the interior man, and these were, in Scripture language, the putting off the old Adam and putting on Christ. These were the great principles which he followed in his conduct of souls and on which he grounded the whole perfection of his society. "We were fully agreed," writes M. du Ferrier, "that no good can be expected from a seminarist unless he be firmly convinced that, to live a Christian life and thence ascend to the ecclesiastical state, he must die to Adam and live to Jesus Christ. This it is which must be inculcated on all who come to us; if they have no relish for this it is useless to look for any good from them; we can but say to them, '*Ideo vos*

* The Abbé Faillon is at the trouble of establishing this fact at some length, in refutation of those who have given the precedence, in point of time, to St. Vincent de Paul, M. Bourdoise, and others. He shows, also, how M. Olier's labours were destined, as P. de Condren had foretold, to inspire the Congregation of the Oratory and other societies with a corresponding zeal in the erection of ecclesiastical seminaries.

non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis;' * we can but remind them of the words of the Apostle to his Roman converts, and say to them, 'Know ye not that all we who are baptised in Jesus Christ are baptised into His death, and are buried with Him, and with Him are risen again, that we may live the life, not of the old man, but of the new; a life of death to everything which nature, the senses, and the world love and esteem; a resurrection life, conformable with the life of Jesus Christ, whose Spirit we have received?'" †

It was at this time that, in obedience to his director P. Bataille, he began to set down in writing the particular graces which he received from God, and all the more notable circumstances of his life, so far as related to the progress of his sanctification. We are enabled, therefore, to give in his own words the instructions which in conversation and otherwise he imparted to his ecclesiastics. "Speaking one day" (he writes) "to our young associates on the necessity of crucifying the old man that the life of our Lord may be made manifest in us, I said that, in order to give Jesus Christ complete liberty to act within us, we must crucify the flesh by poverty, suffering, and mortification; that never would He enable us to make acts of humility unless we mortified the spirit and the movements of our own pride. Whereupon one of them said to me relative to the subject of poverty, 'Is there, then, no difference between counsels and precepts? Wherein do they differ, if the renunciation of the goods of fortune, which appears to be only a counsel, is nevertheless necessary to us all?' God suggested to me the following reply: 'In this matter of renunciation two things must be considered—interior detachment and actual despoliation. The first is of precept; the second is of counsel. The first is in such wise necessary that without some degree of interior detachment from earthly goods we cannot save our souls; according to those words of our Lord which are addressed, not to any individual in particular, but to every Christian: *Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be My disciple.*' ‡ We must live in the midst of worldly goods, and even acquire them, as if we possessed them not, without allowing our affections to cling to them by any disorderly attachment of the heart. Whereas that which is of counsel is actually to part with these same goods, because of the difficulty there is in not loving them when we possess them; as if our Lord said to us, 'I counsel

* "Therefore you hear not, because you are not of God." St. John viii. 47.
† Comp. Rom. vi. 3–5. ‡ St. Luke xiv. 33.

you to part with your goods in case you cannot possess them without loving them.' This appears in those words addressed to a certain young man who loved his possessions: *Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor.** God commands even this exterior renunciation when there is evident peril of sin.

"A few days ago a question was put to me to which I will here give the answer, as it does not seem to have come from myself. One of our young associates, experiencing some difficulty in giving up the habits of the world, and particularly in the matter of his hair, asked me why we have such an attachment to mere trifles. I replied, on the moment, that it has its source in self-love, and in the great desire we have of pleasing the world and possessing a share in its esteem and affection, one of the strongest and most deeply-rooted desires in man, who is made up of pride. Now, the hair having been given him for ornament, and conducing to a comely appearance and consequently to making him well regarded and agreeable in the eyes of the world and of himself—this is why we are so extremely attached thereto. When it is cut off we feel it keenly, as though we had been shorn of a portion of our self-love, and our pride had been maimed and mutilated; for one of our means of attracting the love and esteem of the world has, in fact, been destroyed. The pain we feel is a measure of the desire we have of making an appearance, and being admired and loved by creatures. This it is to which we must die, as I am constantly saying, seeking the love and esteem of no one, that we may do no wrong to our God, who alone ought to fill all minds and all hearts."

M. Olier exhorted his followers to kill the old man † only that he

* St. Matthew xix. 21.

† A ludicrous story is told in connection with M. Olier's frequent repetition of this phrase. One day he was exhorting his followers with his usual energy, and often repeated the same expression: "*Il faut faire mourir le vieil homme*—(We must put the old man to death)." The gardener's wife happened to be listening at the door, and, thinking that "the old man" meant her husband, hastened in a state of great consternation to apprize her spouse of the fate that awaited him. Terrified at his wife's report, the old man resolved to quit the house that very day, and, going to M. Olier, he said with a voice almost choked with fear, "Oh! Sir, pray give me leave to go; my wife has told me everything; I wish to live a little longer; I know all your design." "What design?" asked M. Olier. "Oh! you know better than I can tell you." "But, my good friend, what do you mean?" "Why, did you not say that the old man must be put to death? I am old, it is true, but old age is no crime, and I am still able to support myself." Despite the evident terror and agitation of the poor gardener it was impossible

might establish within them the life of Jesus Christ, the new man, created in justice and true holiness. This was the point to which all his addresses were directed. With the affection of a father he applied himself to the removal of any doubts by which their minds were perplexed or disturbed, as well as to the mitigation in practice of the apparent rigour of his maxims; and always with eventual success. There was amongst them an ecclesiastic of excellent disposition and an accomplished theologian, but he had come filled with his own ideas and furnished with a system of piety devised by himself. His mind revolted at the pure spirituality proposed to him, and he combated it with all the appliances of his theological science. To punish him for his attachment to his own views, God permitted him suddenly to lose all recollection of the knowledge he possessed; and when he endeavoured to reason on any subject he became bewildered and confused. Sensible, at last, of the miserable state to which his pride had reduced him, and unable to resist the force of truth, he confessed himself vanquished; and immediately God restored to him all that, in chastisement of his obstinacy, He had taken from him, and he became one of the humblest and most obedient in the community.

The very spirit of the seminary was that of union with Jesus Christ. "Explaining one day," writes M. Olier, "a number of questions which had been put to me on the necessity of uniting ourselves with our Lord in our actions, I said:—When we unite ourselves to Him by faith, that instant we are clothed with His intentions; He resides within us only to be entirely ours, to the end that His Father may be glorified by us; and our works, done by the movement of the Holy Spirit, become invested through Him with a marvellous sanctity. What more easy than to say to God, at the beginning of all our actions, 'My God, I renounce my own disorderly intentions, and I give myself to Thee, to perform my actions in Thy intentions, which are infinitely adorable'? We may unite ourselves to the intentions He had in doing works similar to our own; as, for example, when He ate, drank, slept, conversed, prayed, and the rest. Although you know not what those intentions were, do not the less consent to all, and desire them such as they are in themselves, and as God

for M. Olier and his companions to refrain from laughing; but it was no easy matter to persuade him that the "old man" whose death M. Olier had so vehemently demanded was nothing else but that corrupt nature which every one ought to endeavour to mortify in himself.

knows them. The Eternal Father, seeing you would desire to have all the intentions of His Son, and that you would be glad to give expression to them in your interior, if you were capable, will regard your actions with great complacency. We may unite ourselves with the intentions of the Son of God even in actions which He never performed exteriorly on earth, for He offered them all previsionally for us. In constituting His Church He designed to make it perform all its works to the glory of His Father; so that all Christians, without a single exception, are but the executors of the designs and intentions of Jesus Christ.

"To all my instructions," he adds, "I bring no other preparation but that of renouncing myself and my own knowledge, waiting for what God may please to give me for the good of His children; and this way of acting is so efficacious and so powerful that I see them making far greater advances in three weeks than I made myself in eight or ten years, during which I was ignorant of the ways which it is necessary to follow in order to arrive purely at God. I pray our Lord to continue His graces both to them and to myself; but, if they go on as they have begun, I cannot help persuading myself that they must become saints. I firmly believe that God regards the whole community with complacency, because of the purity with which it walks and the zeal with which it labours in His service. I may even say, in passing, that, having the consciences of all in my keeping, I have been a considerable time without remarking in any one of them a single venial sin. There is no longer any question here of the things of the world, or of aught that may content the flesh, any more than if we were living the life of the saints after the resurrection."

The conversion of the Canadian Indians had long been an object of the deepest interest to M. Olier, and it was in this same memorable year (1642) that he first made the acquaintance of one who, by his prayers and personal exertions, contributed most effectually to the success of that holy enterprise. This was Claude Leglay, or, as he was always called, Brother Claude, a native of Lorraine; of whom it is sufficient to say that his low estate and exalted sanctity, combined with the extraordinary influence which he exercised over the good and great, render him worthy of being classed in the same category with Marie Rousseau. His condition in life was that of an artisan, and he had come to Paris, with his wife and family,* to

* More particulars respecting this remarkable man will be found in the Life of M. Boudon. He died at an extreme old age. His wife, who survived him, was

escape the effects of the dreadful famine which was then desolating his country. Desirous only of serving God in lowliness and obscurity, his piety and virtues acquired him a reputation, and even a celebrity, which equalled, if it did not surpass, that of any of the most accomplished masters of the spiritual life. His knowledge of Divine things was truly marvellous in one who was, not only illiterate, but compelled to labour for his daily maintenance, and could have been imparted to him only by the immediate teaching of the Holy Spirit. Persons distinguished both for their piety and their rank in the world went to hear and to converse with him; and on Sundays and other holidays, when he was not engaged in his work, a long line of carriages might be seen standing in the humble street in which he lived. Men who were reckoned the oracles of the day in religious matters were in the habit of consulting him, and in 1641, when M. Le Gauffre succeeded P. Bernard in the conduct of those works of charity to which the Poor Priest had devoted himself, Brother Claude was induced, after much entreaty, to enter the service of that good pastor for the purpose of assisting him in his labours. It was then that the more supernatural portion of his life began to develop itself. Although naturally of a lively disposition, he was inwardly so occupied with God as to be at times wholly withdrawn from this outer world. In the crowded streets of Paris he remained insensible to all the din and tumult around him; he neither saw nor heard aught of the thousands who were crossing his path in all directions; in truth, he was as unconscious of their presence and proximity as if he had been traversing a lonely, silent heath in utter darkness. He was jostled, struck, thrown to the ground, run over, trampled on; in an instant he was on his feet again, and, though often bruised, and even, in appearance, injured, he seemed to be protected and preserved from harm by an invisible hand. He had in him the very spirit of Elias in rebuking and withstanding evil, and a heart filled with an impatient desire to quit the world and go to God; "such," says M. Olier, "as the souls of the blessed might be supposed to have if they revisited their mortal bodies."

On the 16th of July, 1642, being the feast of our Lady of Mount

largely indebted for her support, after her husband's death, to the bounty of the Community of St. Sulpice. She was permitted to reside in a house at Vaugirard belonging to the Society, and M. de Bretonvilliers left a sum of money to be expended upon her from time to time according to her needs.

Carmel, M. Olier went to say Mass at Notre Dame des Champs, the church of the Carmelites.* There was a gathering of the friends of the Canadian mission, and among them were several who were preparing to go to Montréal. Brother Claude was also present, and by a particular movement of the Holy Spirit—for he had no knowledge of M. Olier's vocation—he was led to pray all through the Mass for two things: first, that the priest then offering the Holy Sacrifice might attain to a perfect union with God; secondly, that he might become a great captain in the army of Christ, to marshal soldiers in His service. At the same time he conceived a strong personal affection for him, and, on meeting M. Olier in the afternoon of the same day, he declared that in him he had at length found the friend he had long been seeking. From that moment these two holy men remained bound to each other in the closest ties of union. In this circumstance M. Olier did but find another occasion of humbling himself, and confessing his own vileness. "It has made me feel," he says, "more than ever that in my very self I am mere nothingness and sin, worthy only of being hated and accursed of God. But I see, with a clearness exceeding that of day, that there is something in me which is not myself: this it is which constrains these holy souls to come to me, and to speak words of benediction directed truly to our Lord."

But not only did M. Olier exercise an extraordinary influence over those with whom he was brought into contact, he seemed to possess a supernatural insight into the secrets of men's hearts. Scarcely had they who came to consult him opened their lips, when he knew, as by a divine instinct, the nature of their requests and the state of their souls. One of the members of the community, yielding to the suggestions of others, had formed the design of quitting the society. Dissatisfied, however, with himself, he went to M. Olier and begged him to tell him his faults. In an instant the servant of God perceived what was in his mind, and laid open before him his intentions in such fulness of detail that, struck with astonishment, the man went about among his brethren declaring

* An interesting account of the negotiations by which the Priory and Church of Notre Dame des Champs, which had belonged to the Benedictine Order, came into the possession of the Carmelites, on their first introduction into France in the year 1604, is given in the first volume of the Abbé Haussaye's valuable history of the life and times of Cardinal de Bérulle. The church was taken down to make room for a street called subsequently Du Val de Grace, and only the vestibule was preserved, which at the present day forms the chapel of the convent.

that M. Olier had disclosed to him all the hidden thoughts of his heart. And so it was continually. He would feel himself moved to speak with peculiar earnestness on some particular subject, and an hour or two afterwards one of the community would come and tell him that the words he had uttered had gone home to his conscience with a force he could not resist. He would address himself to some of his young ecclesiastics when he had made his thanksgiving after Mass, and their souls would be set on fire with divine love, and they would be filled with an intense desire of offering themselves like so many living victims on the altar of God. By the help of the light within him he would solve the deepest questions of theology: sometimes on the instant; at others, as though to remind him that the knowledge he had was not his own but the mere gift of God, he would be left awhile in darkness, and then, as with a sudden flash, the truth would dart into his mind, and all would be clear to him. "This," he says, "is my daily experience, whether in conversation or in hearing confessions. The clearness of the light varies with different persons, but to all I answer according to their respective needs, with no other preparation than that of renouncing my own spirit, waiting for whatever it may please God to give me for the good of His children."

The same thing happened in his public preaching. One day, in particular,—it was the Eve of the Annunciation, 1642,—he was desired to go and prepare the people for a worthy celebration of the feast. He went at once, but with his mind as if in a state of blank; he felt unable to utter a word. Twice he was on the point of avowing as much; but, accustomed to this feeling of incompetency, he resigned himself with all simplicity into the hands of Him who gives sight to the blind and makes the dumb to speak. Immediately his mind was filled with light, and he spoke with so much power and fervour that his auditors were deeply affected, and himself not least, at the sweet and holy things that fell from his lips as he discoursed of Jesus and Mary. Such was the effect of his exhortation that in the morning the people came in crowds to confession and communion, and it was between one and two o'clock in the day before all had finished. His words also had often a wonderful application beyond his own knowledge or intention. Thus, one Sunday, in the fervour of his address, he broke out with a panegyric on the sanctity of the great Patriarch St. Francis. Now, it so happened that at that

very moment, unknown to him, there came into the church a friar of the Order who had gone back into the world. The poor culprit was covered with confusion, and, following M. Olier into the sacristy, stood before him with eyes cast down and as if speechless with shame and remorse; so cut to the heart had he been by the impassioned words of the preacher, which seemed to have been directed at himself.

Another instance was still more remarkable, and is characteristic both of the man and of the times. It was the feast of St. James, and he was preaching on the Gospel for the day, inveighing with his accustomed energy against those who, like the mother of Zebedee's sons, seek to promote their offspring to high places in God's kingdom for the sake of the emoluments and dignities attaching thereto. "Verily," said he, "the altars of Jesus Christ would be deserted, and the churches left empty, were it not for the pride and self-love which urge so many to enter the ecclesiastical state." Then, lifting up his voice and carried, as it were, out of himself by the indignation which worldly vanity and ambition ever excited in his soul, he exclaimed, "Had this blessed Apostle been in my place, and were he standing at this moment in this pulpit, he would have preached against his own mother, and with his own lips have denounced himself for having suggested the unhallowed request which she had preferred in his behalf." In the midst of his harangue there came into the church his cousin, Mme. Dolu de Dampierre, accompanied by her two sons. M. Olier saw her enter, but had no suspicion of the object of her visit, which was nothing else but to request him to use the influence he possessed at court to obtain preferment for her children. When the sermon was ended, the lady, nothing daunted by what she had heard—in all probability perfectly unconscious of any application the discourse might have to herself, or regarding it as nothing more than one of those unmeaning oratorical displays which it had not unfrequently been her lot to witness in other places—paid her intended visit, and preferred her request with all the confidence imaginable. The reader will not need to be told what kind of reception she met with from her relative; it is sufficient to say that she retired in tears, which, we may hope, had their source in true compunction and not in a mere feeling of mortified pride.

The inmates of Mme. Villeneuve's establishment, as well as the

children under their care, were the objects of his tender solicitude, and we read of his collecting both mistresses* and scholars together, and making them an exhortation which produced the liveliest effects, and on none more sensibly than himself. He spoke to them of the Holy Spirit, experiencing (as he says) a peculiar delight in making Him known to souls. He adds that he scarcely ever preached on any subject without himself, in the course of his address, deriving lights concerning it which he had not enjoyed before; and he instances a sermon he delivered on the feast of the Transfiguration, in which thoughts were suggested to him infinitely surpassing anything that had occurred to his mind in his previous meditations.

* Among these was Mlle. Bellier, whom the reader will recollect as having been led to retire from the world by M. Olier's preaching during the mission at Illiers. In 1651 she entered the Order of the Visitation.

CHAPTER XI.

M. OLIER ACCEPTS THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THE PARISH OF ST. SULPICE. REMOVAL OF THE SEMINARY FROM VAUGIRARD TO PARIS.

A FEW months only had elapsed since the establishment of the seminary at Vaugirard, and the Providence of God, to which M. Olier and his companions had wholly surrendered themselves, was already opening a way to the fulfilment of their designs, under circumstances which set at complete defiance all human calculations. The parish of St. Sulpice was the most extensive in the metropolis, being a sort of city in itself, under the jurisdiction, civil and ecclesiastical, of the Abbé de St. Germain,* and had become the very cesspool, not only of Paris, but of all France, the home and the haunt of all that was foul and iniquitous. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon, who resided within its limits, horrified at the disorders which met her eyes at every turn, had prevailed on the priests of the Conferences of St. Lazare to give a mission in one of its quarters. This had taken place in the preceding year, 1641, under the conduct of M. de Perrochel; but, although much good was effected in the immediate locality—the concourse being so great that the mission was obliged to be transferred to the abbey-church of St. Germain—it did but reveal more distinctly the enormity of the evil and the hopelessness of providing an adequate remedy by ordinary methods. At length the Curé, M. Julien de Fiesque, determined in his despair to relinquish the benefice whenever he could meet with a worthy successor. His thoughts adverted to M. Olier, with whom he was personally acquainted and for whom he entertained a particular

* It included the present parishes of St. Sulpice, St. Germain-des-Prés, St. François Xavier, Ste. Clotilde, St. Thomas d'Aquin, and Notre Dame des Champs, not to mention the parish of Gros Caillou and the Hotel des Invalides. The population numbered over 450,000 souls, being greater than that of any city or town in France, with the sole exception of Paris.

respect; many also had begun to speak of the new institution at Vaugirard, and of the devotion of its directors; and he seemed to see in these men, detached from the world and living solely to God, the only persons capable of executing a work which, with all his good intentions, he had proved utterly powerless even to attempt. An opportunity soon presented itself of sounding their dispositions. Every year, on St. Mark's day, there was a procession of his parishioners to the church at Vaugirard, and, as M. Copin was still absent, it fell to the lot of the little community to preside at the usual ceremonies. But, if M. de Fiesque had conceived any hopes that his proposition would be favourably entertained, he must have been greatly disappointed, for, on the part of both M. Olier and the rest, he met, not only with a decided refusal to undertake the charge, but with a positive reluctance to speak on the subject. Circumstances, however, shortly after enabled him to renew his overture. Vaugirard lying on the borders of Paris, some of the parishioners of St. Sulpice came to make their confession to M. Olier and his priests, and M. du Ferrier was accordingly deputed to ascertain from the Curé whether he had any objection to their receiving his people. M. de Fiesque gave his cordial consent, and took occasion at the same time to repeat his proposal. "If," said he, "your object be to labour for the good of souls and to form a community of priests, why put people to the trouble of going so far to seek you? Come here, where you will have everything you lack at Vaugirard, and your friends will be near you. Besides, it will be an accommodation to me. Let M. Olier make over to me his priory of Clisson in Brittany, of which I am a native; the benefice brings in 1,600 livres; add thereto a pension of 1,400 livres, and the matter is settled." M. du Ferrier, however, could hardly listen to him with patience, and so they parted.

Now, Marie Rousseau (or Marie de Gournay, as she was indifferently called) resided near the church of St. Sulpice, and it occurred to M. du Ferrier that he would pay her a visit and acquaint her with the proposal which had been made to him; when, to his astonishment, he found that she was already in possession of all that had occurred. "This morning, at nine o'clock," said she, "you were with M. le Curé; he was the first to begin the subject about resigning his parish, and begged you to obtain M. Olier's concurrence;" and she proceeded to relate in detail everything that had passed. This circumstance, as showing that the project was one in which

Heaven was interested, no doubt contributed not a little towards preparing M. du Ferrier's mind for a favourable consideration of the Curé's proposal. And here it may be mentioned that M. du Ferrier had conceived a strong prejudice against Marie Rousseau on account of the extraordinary graces with which she was favoured, and all the more because she was held in high estimation by many distinguished persons. He feared there might be, not only illusion, but something of vainglory, and had no wish to make her acquaintance. However, he had so far yielded to the remonstrances of M. Olier and M. Picoté as to go on several occasions to see her, but some time elapsed before he succeeded in finding her at home; at which, he says in his *Mémoires*, he was all the better pleased. At last he found her within, and she then informed him that every time he had set out to visit her she had received a divine intimation of his coming, and had been admonished to leave the house before he reached it. And certainly (he adds) she was made acquainted in some mysterious way with his movements, for one day she had told him that a conference he had prepared for the seminarists, and which no one had seen, was too strongly worded, and had suggested the mode in which it might be corrected.

Ever since M. Olier and his associates had taken up their abode at Vaugirard, Marie Rousseau had made their removal to St. Sulpice the subject of her continual pleadings with God. On Sunday, the 18th of May, while thus engaged, she felt herself interiorly moved to make known to M. Olier what had been revealed to her in prayer. Accordingly, she went to him and said that the proposal which M. de Fiesque had so often and so persistently urged upon him was the means provided by God for carrying into effect the work he had been called to do,—the evangelisation of a vast parish, to the saving of numerous souls, and the formation of a seminary which should be the parent and the model of similar institutions throughout France. The effect of these representations on the part of one in whose judgment he placed the greatest confidence was to dispose M. Olier in favour of the plan proposed, and, on his communicating the change in his sentiments to M. de Foix and M. du Ferrier, the three discussed the subject together; the former marking down with a pencil, on the back of a letter, the reasons for and against, with the view of consulting their director P. Tarrisse.

At an early hour the next morning M. du Ferrier repaired to Paris, where he said Mass, and then took post to Vendôme, where

P. Tarrisse, with P. Bataille, was holding a general chapter of his Congregation. Day had not dawned when M. du Ferrier left Vaugirard, and on his way he beheld a meteor which seemed to explode directly over St. Sulpice, and, although he knew it was but a natural phenomenon, it recalled to his memory the words of our Lord to His disciples: "*I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven*," * and he accepted it as a sign that God would succour His Church, and defeat all the power and malice of the devil. It was evening before he reached Vendôme, and he proceeded at once to lay the matter before the Father. His reply was direct and decisive: that the hand of Providence was visible in the opportunity that now presented itself of establishing a model seminary for the whole of France, and that the affair should be prosecuted without delay. He added that they might rely on receiving all the assistance which his Congregation could render; and this was not small, for, the parish of St. Sulpice being dependent on the Benedictines, under the Holy See, and altogether exempt from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop, the affair rested entirely with themselves, and there was no occasion to obtain the approval or sanction of that prelate or of his council; a proceeding which might have been attended with difficulties and have provoked opposition, as it would have been necessary, not only to convince them of the feasibility of the undertaking, but to obtain their approval of the persons to whom its administration should be confided, as well as of the rules and practices, both disciplinary and devotional, to be adopted by the community. Fortified by this decision, M. du Ferrier, on his return through Paris, lost no time in calling on M. de Fiesque and receiving from him a verbal assurance of his readiness to resign his parish into M. Olier's hands on the conditions which he had himself proposed.

No sooner did it become known at Paris that the community of Vaugirard were about to undertake the pastoral charge of St. Sulpice than the greatest dissatisfaction prevailed. So strong was the conviction that the reform of a parish so extensive and so depraved exceeded the powers of M. Olier and his associates, that even good men conspired together to crush the project at its birth. But here again the supernatural knowledge manifested by Marie Rousseau came to their rescue. On the 22nd of May she knew by an interior light that at that moment two ecclesiastics at the other end of Paris

* St. Luke x. 18.

were concocting measures for the overthrow of the design; and she imparted the fact to a person who lived with her. The next day one of these very ecclesiastics came to confer with her, and was met on his appearance with these words, uttered with her usual simplicity: "So, Sir, a pretty business this in which you are engaged; you want, then, to frustrate the work of the Lord. Yesterday, between four and five o'clock, you and such a one (mentioning his name) were busy enough at it. I saw how the devil, who is bent on upsetting the work, succeeded in warping your mind; but take care what you are about." These words produced so complete a change in the disposition of her visitor that he went to Vaugirard, and himself pressed M. Olier and his colleagues to take charge of the parish. Some even of their own immediate friends exhibited much indignation at their presumption and temerity, for such they regarded the attempt to grapple with an evil of so tremendous a magnitude; and M. Renar (of whom mention has been before made) proceeded to Vaugirard for the purpose of remonstrating with them. They listened to his protest, which was couched in no gentle terms, and thanked him for his counsel, but assured him that they had not acted without consulting the Divine will; adding that they deserved all the ill-success and confusion which he predicted, but that they begged him to pray to God that they might have grace to profit by their discomfiture. "Ah!" exclaimed he, "that is just what I said: when they are warned of their imprudence, they will think they set all straight by making an act of humiliation; and yet good people will be despised, and piety itself decried, because these gentlemen are pleased to undertake what they will never be able to accomplish."

When M. Olier first acceded to M. de Fiesque's proposal it formed no part of his design to undertake the office of Curé, and he begged several of his colleagues to accept the charge, but they one after another declined. By some, including (it need hardly be said) Marie Rousseau, he was strongly urged to take the office himself, but his humility impelled him to refuse. He was afraid of the consideration and honour which such a position would bring with it, especially on the part of the great people of the Faubourg, and he prayed God with all earnestness to deliver him from so great a peril. On the Eve of the Ascension, May 28th, he went to consult Marie Rousseau, who at once, and without hesitation, declared that he was himself to be Curé of St. Sulpice; that such was the will of God, and that no opposition could prevent it. She bade him,

therefore, abandon himself courageously to the Divine pleasure, and not be disheartened, even if all his friends and associates were to forsake him and follow other vocations. She told him at the same time that a person who was opposed to the undertaking would induce M. de Fiesque to increase his demands; which, in fact, came to pass as she said, for he subsequently required his pension to be raised to 1,800 livres.

With the exception of his three original colleagues, all the priests of the little community were of opinion that the charge of a parish so vast in extent and so notorious for its demoralisation would be too heavy a burden, particularly as coupled with the establishment of an ecclesiastical seminary in the suburbs of Paris. Their resources were exhausted by the attempts that had been made, first at Chartres and afterwards at Vaugirard, and the two projects combined would involve a large expenditure, for which they saw no prospect of being able to provide. In vain did Marie Rousseau bid them trust in God, whose will they would be fulfilling: she could offer no guarantee for the success of the enterprise except her own assured convictions; and in these they reposed no confidence. Nearly a month had now elapsed and the affair had made no sensible progress, notwithstanding renewed importunities on the part of M. de Fiesque, when an end was put to all further debating through the agency of three religious who had been Marie Rousseau's directors, and whom she had made acquainted with the lights she had received from time to time in connection with the matter in dispute. These were P. André of the Petits Augustins, who was highly esteemed by persons of piety for his great spiritual gifts, and who had known Marie for four-and-twenty years; the Père Ignace, a Discalced Carmelite, who was believed to have been favoured with heavenly communications, a man for whose virtues M. Olier entertained the deepest respect, styling him a great servant of God, of singular sweetness and simplicity, whose life was truly hidden in Christ; and a Jesuit Father, whose name is not given, but who had been for a while the guide of her soul after P. Armand's decease. Going to Vaugirard to confer with the ecclesiastics there, these three religious enumerated so many instances in which she had made known to them the will of God in matters of the greatest moment, that the prejudices of those who had been ignorant of her merits were entirely removed, while they who had been adverse to the proposed transfer to St. Sulpice withdrew their opposition, and it was defini-

tively determined to conclude the negotiation with M. de Fiesque without further delay. The only difficulty which remained lay in M. Olier's unwillingness to accept the charge of the parish. St. Vincent de Paul and M. Bourdoise had from the first been urgent with him to do so,* and, on his still hesitating, P.P. Tarrisse and Bataille, as his directors, ordered him, under obedience, to accept the office.

No longer doubting the Divine will, the servant of God cast himself at the feet of his heavenly Patroness and begged her to aid him in bearing the burden; henceforth there was no indecision or distrust. Was it objected that so small a body of priests would be unable to cope with an evil of such gigantic magnitude, he answered that God, who had inspired himself and his little band with the courage to undertake the work, was able to impart the same grace to others also, and that, if with twelve Apostles He had subdued the world, He would not fail, even by their ministry alone, to win to Himself this single parish, if such were His holy will. Was he warned of the injury to health which so heavy a charge would entail, his reply was simply that to do God's will we must sacrifice even life itself, and that there could be no greater happiness than to die in the exercise of charity. "If Jesus Christ," he said, "was pleased to give His life for the glory of His Father and the salvation of men, who shall prevent me from sacrificing mine for the glory of the same God, and to secure to souls the possession of those graces which He purchased for them by His death?" Moreover, a profound conviction now possessed him that at length the designs of Providence which had long ago, and all through his life, been intimated to him with more or less distinctness, were about to receive their consummation. He called to mind the dream which had left so indelible an impression on his memory when, nine or ten years before, he had seen Pope St. Gregory the Great on a lofty throne, with St. Ambrose seated below him; while below again were seats for priests, with a vacant place immediately beneath the latter saint, and below all, and, as it seemed, even far below, were ranged a number of Carthusian monks; and now he understood its import in its full significance, and it was shown him that the reform of a parish so notorious for its wickedness as that in which he was called to labour, would be an example and a model for similar reforms, not only in Paris, but throughout the realm. At the same time, as appears from the

* In the processes of his canonization, St. Vincent is represented as having been instrumental in causing M. Olier to accept the charge of the parish of St. Sulpice.

writings he has left us, there was unfolded before him the whole scheme of his vocation, involving as it did these three great objects:

1. The instruction and reformation of the people, high and low.

2. The introduction of the highest Christian maxims into the schools of the Sorbonne, by means of those seminarists who should proceed to the doctorate.

3. The formation of young ecclesiastics for all the functions of the sacred ministry.

It was on June 25th, during the octave of Corpus Christi, that the agreement for the transfer of the parish was finally concluded, of which, however, M. Olier was not to have actual possession until the arrangement had been sanctioned by the Holy See. But so assured was he of the Divine will that, with the approval of his director, P. Bataille, he had already hired a house adjoining the Presbytery, where he was preparing to receive the ecclesiastics who had been admitted at Vaugirard. On July 31st he had an interview with the Abbé de St. Germain, Henri de Bourbon,* who welcomed him with every demonstration of regard. On the same day he made a solemn protestation of perpetual devotion to the service of the parish on behalf of himself and his colleagues; and he notices, as a remarkable coincidence, that twelve members of his society came also on that day to the church of St. Sulpice for the same purpose, without having communicated with each other, as though to ratify severally, one by one, the oblation which he had made in the name of all.†

* It is worthy of note in how many instances men like this Abbé de St. Germain were constrained, as it were, to co-operate in the reform of those very abuses of which they were themselves the most flagrant examples. Henri de Bourbon, Marquis de Verneuil, was a natural son of Henry IV. Although he had never received holy orders, he was given the see of Metz, and held nine rich abbeys in addition to that of St. Germain, the revenues of which he squandered in luxurious living at Paris, even at a time when the people of his diocese were dying by thousands of famine. In 1678 he married. Many of the great abbeys of France were held by laymen and even by *Protestants:* that of Fontgombault, for instance, was in the possession of a Protestant family for nearly a hundred years (*Histoire Du Berry*, T. I. L. XI.). Often, too, they were farmed out by the holders in order to raise money for their lavish expenditure. For some very gross examples of this iniquitous and most scandalous abuse of ecclesiastical patronage the reader is referred to Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident: Introduction*, Chap. VII. p. clxi.–clxvii.

† This act seems to have been accepted by the Divine Goodness, for from M. Olier's days to our own the Curés of St. Sulpice have always been members of the Community. Indeed, so essential to the spirit and object of the institute has this connection between the seminary and the parish been considered, that in 1802, when the house was taken down, M. Emery, the Superior, preferred purchasing,

The position of parish priest had become so contemptible in the eyes of the world, or, in other words, of worldly ecclesiastics, that no one of good birth would condescend to assume the office. Persons of quality who entered holy orders were content with nothing short of being bishops or abbés, or of possessing some benefice which yielded revenues sufficient to enable them to live in affluence, frequent the Court, and make a figure in society. Even the largest and most important parishes in Paris, as we learn from P. Rapin, of the Company of Jesus, were served by priests who had been brought from the provinces; a Curé being regarded as belonging altogether to an inferior caste. It was, therefore, with infinite disgust that M. Olier's relatives learned that, after refusing a bishopric to which a peerage was attached, he had actually accepted the charge of this country parish, for so they regarded one of the *faubourgs*, or suburbs, of Paris. That a scion of their house, who might have appeared at Court with all the pomp and circumstance of a prelate of the Church, should be seen walking the streets of the capital in the garb of a humble Curé, appeared to them a studied personal affront. They felt themselves positively aggrieved and outraged by conduct so unseemly, and his mother, accompanied by his eldest brother, went to Vaugirard for the purpose of formally remonstrating with him on the disgrace he was bringing on himself and his family. Finding all their expostulations unavailing, Mme. Olier, in her indignation, forbade her son ever to set foot again inside her doors; while that true child of God, though deeply wounded in heart, so far from imputing blame, sought even to excuse the unkindness with which he had been treated. "I can hardly bring myself to tell you," he said, writing to P. Bataille, "what I have suffered from my mother and my eldest brother; and yet I will say nothing to their prejudice, for they only do what they think is right. They are far more free from guilt than I am in my most ordinary actions. I believe them to be quite innocent in this matter; they think I am doing something unbecoming a man of my birth." His youngest brother alone seemed capable of appreciating his conduct, for, thanks to M. Olier's counsels and assistance, he had unlearned and now estimated at their due value the false maxims of the world.*

at his own expense, a building within the limits of the parish to accepting a more commodious habitation, which was offered him on peculiarly advantageous terms in another quarter of the town.

* M. Olier had the happiness of leading his eldest brother to repentance, and

The following extract from the *Mémoires* of this devoted pastor will show with what sentiments he entered upon the sacred duties of his ministry:—

"I remember saying to one of our missionaries, more than six or seven years ago, that the fruits produced by missions were but an earnest and a beginning of that which must be done in the Church at large. The mission serves only to purify hearts and lead men to repentance, not to inculcate Christian sentiments and teach Christian practice. This must be done by familiar addresses, catechisings, meditations, and retreats. I experience in myself such a vehement desire of exhibiting to men the vanity of the world, the obligation which lies upon us of dying to its maxims, its manners, its laws—in a word, to everything which is not God and Jesus Christ, His Son—that I am unable to restrain it; it excites in me sometimes a sort of holy rage; it is a participation of the horror which Jesus Christ had for the follies and vanities of the world. I feel such a passionate desire to expose them before the eyes of men that I see no other means of satisfying it than by availing myself of the occasion offered by Providence in the parish of St. Sulpice. This desire becomes still more inflamed when I reflect that all our greatest people reside in that parish; and then I rejoice at having the opportunity, so long coveted, of showing them their vanity and disabusing them of their errors. All our Company are burning with the same zeal, and long to go into that faubourg and make God known there. Ah! if the exercise of the pastoral office inspires us with such sentiments of zeal and devotion as the mere prospect of it has generated in our hearts, I hope that our great Master will find therein His honour and glory. . . . I experience such a mighty desire to save all the world, and to spread abroad zeal for the love and glory of God in all hearts, that fain would I have a thousand emissaries whom I could send to carry everywhere the love of Jesus Christ. My heart is all consumed with zeal when I think of the profession which the priests of our little society will make—a profession of servitude to

of disposing him for death. François Olier died in the month of March, 1644, after filling the offices of Maître des Requêtes, President of the Grand Council, and Director of Mines. His youngest brother, Nicolas-Edouard, who was indebted to him for many acts of generous affection and solicitude, died suddenly on the 27th of November, 1669. In the *Généalogies des Maîtres des Requêtes* he is described as Counsellor of State, Secretary of his Majesty and of his finances, Grand Audiencier of France, Seigneur of Fontenelle, of Maison-sur-Seine, of Touquin near Rossy in Brie, &c. His wife was Mme. Renée de Thurin.

Jesus Christ and to the Church His spouse. She is a spouse whom He loves supremely ; a body all of whose members He has espoused, that He may give Himself to each one in particular with as much love as to all united. Who would not wish to love her whom Jesus Christ so loves? Who would not wish to serve her whom He Himself does not disdain to serve? Therefore it was that St. Paul said,* 'We proclaim ourselves your servants for the love of Jesus Christ.' And so we also have had the thought, through the mercy of God and in conformity with the sentiments of our Lord who came to be the servant of His Church, of dedicating our labours to her irrevocably in this parish, ever ready to shed our blood to the last drop, after His example. I pray Him to order our life in this wise, that we may devote ourselves to the salvation of His flock in very deed, and not by word or writing only." And again, he says that, when hearing confessions one day at Vaugirard, he regarded himself as the servant of every soul that came to him, and it was signified to him interiorly that this was the spirit which should animate him in his parochial duties at St. Sulpice: "I ought to look upon every soul as my queen, and consider myself as the common servant of all, ever ready to minister to every one according to his needs, being verily and indeed the servant of the whole Church, and of the parish of St. Sulpice in particular. I am no longer my own, I am the property of all, having sold and devoted myself to their service."

On the 4th of August, in order to prepare himself for entering on the duties of the pastoral office, M. Olier commenced a retreat † under the direction of P. Bataille, in which he was inspired with an extraordinary love of crosses and humiliations, and with an intense desire to suffer a thousand deaths, if thereby he might promote the glory of God and the sanctification of souls; regarding himself, in his sacerdotal office, as another Jesus Christ, sent by the Eternal Father to make the continual sacrifice of himself for the good of his flock. It was at the same time revealed to him that grievous trials awaited him in his new position.

He was still in retreat when information was brought to him that

* Comp. 2 Cor. iv. 5.

† A summary of his meditations during this retreat, as committed to writing by himself, will be found appended to this chapter. They exemplify, in a remarkable manner, the spirit with which he was animated in undertaking the pastoral charge, and which he succeeded in infusing into the members of his community.

M. de Fiesque, wishing to avoid all explanations with his parishioners, had suddenly resolved on quitting St. Sulpice before the feast of the Assumption. The news had not taken him by surprise, for, while engaged in prayer, the Blessed Virgin had said to him, "It is my wish that you should assist at my triumph;" in allusion to the solemn procession which would be made in her honour at St. Sulpice on that day. Several of his colleagues were averse to anticipating the approval of the Holy See, but the Benedictines of St. Germain, unwilling to let the parish remain without a pastor, desired that he should take provisional possession without delay, and fixed the 10th of August, being the feast of St. Laurence, for his induction. P. Bataille also gave his counsel to the same effect. Accordingly, without further preparation, M. Picoté and M. du Ferrier proceeded to take up their abode in the Presbytery; the removal being conducted with such haste that they had not even time to lay in provisions. This was on Saturday, the 9th of August, and the next day M. Olier was to enter on his ministrations. Providence, as he says, seemed to give Its approval of what was being done, for, having need of one on whom he could rely for managing some affairs of importance relative to the transfer, a person came and offered his services who was so eligible in every respect that, had he had a thousand to choose from, he declares he could not have made a happier selection. The Saturday was spent by him in paying visits of respect to some of the great ladies in the parish, but, previously to setting out, he went to present himself before his heavenly Patroness in order to know her will and obtain her blessing. "It seemed to me," he says, "as if she wished me to look upon those I visited simply as her representatives; and this is what I sensibly experienced. I paid no regard to creatures, my mind being occupied with the thought of the Blessed Virgin, and of her alone, all the time I was addressing them." He then blesses the Divine goodness for prompting an act of thoughtful kindness which relieved him of a heavy sorrow. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon came and offered to go, with the Princesse de Condé and other ladies, to call upon his mother, and by their personal civilities endeavour to appease her anger, and make amends to her for the loss of honour which she conceived she had incurred by the conduct of her son.

M. Olier had hoped that P. Tarrisse, as Superior-General of the Benedictines, would have been present in person at his induction and given him formal possession of the church, but, being absent from Paris at the time, he was represented by P. Bataille and another

religious. When they led him to the altar and he stooped to kiss it, he seemed (as he says) to become at that moment the spouse of his Church; he felt as though he were charged with the sins of the whole flock, and bound henceforth to share its sufferings and woes, to be its advocate and protector, and to have only one object and one will, that of procuring it all imaginable blessings and investing it with all possible beauty; that, as St. Paul says,* he might present it to God without spot or wrinkle. "Ah, my God," he exclaims, "what a grace to choose me from the midst of sinners, from the dregs of humanity, from the mire and filth of my sins, to exalt me to this high, holy, and divine dignity of pastor and spouse of the Church! To Thee alone does this dignity and title of right belong. How blind is the world, how depraved, miserable, and ignorant, which judges so unworthily of the true glories of God, when in its blindness and stupidity it thinks that a cure of souls is nothing—that it lowers the dignity of a man of good birth—and believes, vile and wretched as it is, that an origin which dates from Adam, mere birth, accompanied with imaginary goods, riches and honours, is something worthy of esteem!"

The first act of his pastoral office was performed at his youngest brother's house. A gentlewoman belonging to the household, who believed herself to be indebted to his prayers for her deliverance from a grievous malady, having married a parishioner of St. Sulpice, M. Olier was invited to the nuptial feast, and at the end of the repast he felt moved to give the newly wedded couple some instructions on the duties of their state; thus changing, as he says, the tasteless water of earthly pleasures into the rich wine of God's word. He seemed to receive a particular grace for the occasion, the influence of which was felt by all present, the husband testifying to the joy of his soul in terms suggested by the Gospel: "You have given us a delicious draught, far better than the first; you have kept the good wine to the last."

On the feast of the Assumption took place that event which was to be the source of untold blessings to the Church of France, the establishment of the Seminary and Community of St. Sulpice. Early in the morning the ecclesiastics of Vaugirard repaired to the residence prepared for them, and later in the day High Mass was celebrated, at which, by P. Bataille's express desire, M. Olier, surrounded by his clergy, offered the Holy Sacrifice and afterwards

* Eph. v. 27.

conducted the procession in honour of the Queen of Heaven. All through the Mass, and especially at the moment of communion, he had so intimate a sense of the presence of our Lord that his soul seemed to swoon and grow faint with the excesses of divine love. "I had no longer either strength or feeling," he says, "and the thought of the most holy Virgin throned in glory served but to increase the flames, and to kindle still more those consuming heats." He preached the same day, taking for his text the first words of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: "*Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum cælorum.*"* "To-day," he began, "this prophecy of our Lord Jesus receives its great fulfilment, whereon we behold exalted into heaven her who was the humblest of creatures on earth." His heavenly Mistress seemed to rejoice in making him a sharer in her glory on this her day of triumph. Swept away for ever from the memories of men were the humiliations by which the servant of God had been tried in the day of his abasement, and they who had despised and mocked at him now came and did him reverence. Persons holding office in the State, several even of his own relatives, whose influence might prove of the greatest advantage to the cause of religion, were forward in testifying their admiration and respect. The members of his own immediate family were filled with amazement when they perceived how one who fled from honours and the notice of the great was pursued with praises and applause, when they heard themselves congratulated on possessing such a relative, and beheld men and women high in rank and reputation hastening to offer him their services or place themselves under his direction. He meanwhile, though he blessed the goodness of God in thus removing obstacles from before him, and giving him that support and authority which he needed in the execution of his arduous office, nevertheless estimated all these tokens or promises of success at their true value; and when, on the 27th of August, the feast of the Translation of St. Sulpice,† he preached

* "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Matthew v. 3.

† The translation of the relics of St. Sulpice from the monastery at Bourges took place on the 27th of August, 1518; and, owing to the numerous miraculous cures which continued to be wrought at the shrine, that day was observed by the people with greater solemnity and devotion than the feast of the Saint, which occurred on the 17th of January. In M. Olier's own days, the iron bedsteads were still to be seen, in the vaults of the church, on which the sick were laid to pass the night before the Saint's relics.

before a crowded audience, among whom were many doctors of the Sorbonne and other ecclesiastics, on the greatness of the sacerdotal office and the duties of the pastoral charge, and men celebrated for their theological science thronged about him to express the satisfaction with which they had listened to his address, so far from showing contentment at the effect he had produced, we find him saying, in that record of his life to which such constant reference has been made, "It seems to me that as yet I have not preached in the full light of God, and in the energy of His pure word, as by His mercy I did heretofore. I hope that Jesus Christ, my Master, will one day bestow this grace upon me, and I have a confidence that He will. This will be when I shall have received my bulls of institution from Rome, for that is the time at which I begged God to give me His Spirit that I may be able to acquit myself of the charge intrusted to me. Indeed, I feel that I am awaiting this assistance, and that, if I now perform the functions of parish priest, it is but by anticipation."

The Bulls of institution to which the servant of God attached so much importance arrived, as he had hoped, within the octave of our Lady's Nativity, a circumstance which afforded him a sweet and lively satisfaction; and, as always happened to him on that festival, he experienced a sensible renewal of zeal and fervour. But he was to be fitted and prepared for the discharge of his sacred office by a favour (as he regarded it) of quite another kind,—a sudden and very grievous malady, which brought him to the borders of the grave, but only (as his biographer expresses it) to exhibit in a clearer light the perfect renovation which was being wrought within him. Of that interior work of grace he writes in his *Mémoires*, "I may say, to the glory of God, that this malady was extremely profitable to me in helping me to die to the world and to myself, sweetly disposing me to live only for God—the life that may be truly called a new life, the life of the Resurrection. During this illness I felt throughout my body a great weakness and sinking, which I offered to my God, with great joy, for the salvation of souls, enduring it with much patience and love. In this state, I beheld myself as brought to naught before God, like a poor victim, covered with all the sins of the world and praying for their remission with my whole heart. God permitted that during all that time I should experience most importunate temptations of secret pride and self-love, in order that I might die thereto, having henceforth no object save His glory, no desire save that of honouring Him by serving Him, free from all

self-seeking. For it pleased the Divine Goodness to change those dispositions in which I had been during the course of my illness, and to say to me on the 21st of September, the feast of the glorious St. Matthew, that it was His will that I should enter on a new life: that I should be more gentle, more patient, more charitable than ever; that I must renounce every sensible satisfaction in this life, according to what I have heretofore observed in the life of such Christians as are dead to this present life and live only for the other, experiencing no consolation or joy except, like the blessed, in the sight of God and the interests of His glory. And, through this same goodness, God renewed in my soul the disposition in which He had called me to His divine service; to wit, a very great desire of His glory, founded on my own annihilation, endeavouring to promote in every possible way the great glory of God, without myself appearing therein in any manner whatever, without being myself spoken of or thought of in any way, attributing all the honour and glory of His work to God alone, without the creature having any part therein."

Such were the sentiments with which the soul of this true priest of God was filled, as he lay under the weight of what appeared to be a mortal illness; and, indeed, the rumour was widely spread abroad that M. Olier was dead. But for himself, he was all along assured that he was not doomed to die; for, as he told his director, P. Bataille, he had received a divine intimation, some time before, that on the day on which he attained his thirty-fifth year he should be made a *bishop*, which he interpreted to mean a pastor of souls.* And strange to say, contrary to all appearances, on the 20th of September the malady left him as suddenly as it had seized him, and on the 21st he was formally installed as Curé of St. Sulpice, Dom Tarrisse now presiding at the ceremony. It was like a resurrection from the dead, so unexpected and so complete was his return to health and to vigorous activity; as though he was now at length entering on the life to which the Providence of God had destined him.

The work which M. Olier was called to do was, as we have seen, twofold; for he was not only to establish a seminary for the training of ecclesiastics, and to unite therewith a community of priests who should discharge all the ordinary functions of parochial clergy, but with this double task, hitherto found impracticable, he was to com-

* "Episcopum vero, id est, inspectorem, visitatorem, et (ut Latine vertunt quidam) *curatorem*." Estius in B. Petri Epist. 1. c. ii. v. 25.

bine another from which the stoutest hearts might well have shrunk back appalled, that of reforming the most vicious parish in the whole city of Paris. The several works went on together, but for the sake both of clearness and of completeness we shall treat them separately, and, reserving to the third part of this biography the history of the measures he pursued in the formation and sanctification of his clergy and of his successes in establishing seminaries in various cities of France, shall confine ourselves in that which follows to an account of his Apostolic labours in the evangelisation of the people committed to his pastoral care.

SUMMARY OF M. OLIER'S MEDITATIONS DURING HIS RETREAT, PREPARATORY TO ENTERING ON THE PASTORAL CHARGE.

"On the 4th of August, being the feast of St. Dominic, my director gave me for my subject of meditation the importance of succouring souls, and the zeal I ought to have for their salvation, after the example which the Son of God left to all the pastors of His Church. Addressing myself, then, to prayer, I saw that this great love of our Lord for souls had its source in that which He bears His Father. That the glory of His Father is His great and only desire, and that, seeing souls who might glorify Him eternally, He loved them from this motive; He willingly left the bosom of His Father, He quitted His own proper glory, and humbled Himself even to conversing with men, not disdaining to share their poverty. That to render them capable of honouring and glorifying God His Father, He endured so many labours, watchings, and sufferings, and in the end the ignominious death of the Cross. That, as this death would open Heaven to a multitude of souls who should render to God an immortal glory, He would for this end have given a hundred thousand lives, and have suffered a hundred thousand deaths. Nay, more; that His death appearing to Him as nothing in comparison with this glory, no pains, no sufferings were sufficient to satisfy the immense desire He felt of promoting it.

"While I was occupied with these thoughts, it pleased the goodness of Jesus, my only Master, to communicate to me something of these sentiments, so that I felt my heart all on fire, and experienced the most ardent desires to give my God a thousand lives, and a hundred thousand millions of lives, if that were possible, to procure some accession to His glory. This divine communication, which came to me quite suddenly, lasted almost the whole time of my prayer; there was no circumstance in the life or death of my Master which, as I contemplated it, I did not desire closely to imitate, and which I did not resolve to practise, with the approval of my director. My Saviour not only desired to die a thousand times for His Church, He desired also to give Himself to her as food; and this He accomplishes daily in the Most Holy Sacrament. Of this desire, likewise, His goodness made me partaker. If I have not the happiness of shedding my blood

for the Church, I will be, at least, her living victim, to serve for her nourishment; I must possess nothing which is not hers,—above all, my worldly goods, which must be devoted to the support of the poor of this great parish. It shall be my desire, moreover, after having given the day to labour, to spend the night also in prayer before the Most Holy Sacrament. I entreat my director not to deny me this favour, for which I have sighed so long—at least, to grant me the boon sometimes. I desire to imitate in this the piety of my good Master towards His Father, and to be like those lamps whose lot I have so often envied, that my life may be consumed for the glory of God and of Jesus Christ His Son.

"This morning, when preparing to say Mass, I felt in my heart an ardent desire to be in as many places as there are Hosts in all the world, that everywhere I might glorify God: this also is the disposition of my Jesus, the Host (or Victim) of God. As I was about to offer the Holy Sacrifice in honour of the great St. Dominic, who, by means of his Order has been, as it were, dispersed and multiplied throughout the world for so many ages, as often as there have been good religious in his community—which is as a vessel of fire to burn and consume heresies and rekindle fervour in the hearts of the faithful—I besought God that He would bestow on all parishes, and on every place where my Master reposes in the Tabernacle, good pastors who should be ever vigilant in guarding and honouring this divine and adorable treasure, and should know how to dispense it in a manner worthy of its infinite sanctity. O Lord Jesus, true Pastor of the universal Church, apply a speedy remedy to her needs; raise up men who may renew the divine Order of St. Peter, the Order of pastors, with as much love and zeal as St. Dominic established his Order in Thy Church. Inflame with the fire of Thy love and of Thy devotion others, again, who may carry and spread it through all the world. Were I not so wretched and so proud, were I not a very sink of filth and corruption, how willingly would I offer myself to Thee to be employed in any way that might please Thee for the good of Thy Church; how heartily would I offer and devote myself, even as at this moment I do, as a worthless vessel to be put to any use, and to become whatsoever Thou willest! I am Thine without reserve. I am Thy slave, O my Jesus. I have vowed to Thee an absolute servitude, and what I have done is irrevocable; and now I give myself up anew and for ever, not reserving to myself any right to revoke the offering which I make of myself to Thee. Dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure, as an absolute lord and master disposes of his servant and his slave. Of myself I can do nothing. Thou only, O Lord, who art almighty, canst produce anything out of my wretched nothingness.

"On the second day of my retreat I had for the subject of my meditation this truth: The pastor of souls must be a Jesus Christ on earth. Our Lord showed me that I must produce fruit in souls by example; that they are not to be ruled by commanding, but by touching hearts by means of all the Apostolic virtues, and, above all, by sweetness and humility; that being, as I am, the greatest sinner, I must be the most humble of all my flock; being burdened, moreover, with the innumerable sins of all this people. This good Master disposed me yesterday, during the reading at supper, to this last thought of which I speak, drawing my mind to dwell on the command which God gave St. Peter, the universal pastor of the Church,—to eat of all the creeping things contained in that mysterious sheet.* Whence He taught me that, participating in the sins of the whole Church, I ought

* Acts x. 10–16.

to do penance for her, and weep for her sins as for my own, seeing that I am her spouse; for the spouse shares the debts as well as the goods and possessions of his consort. It is also said that this holy Apostle wept continually, not only for his own sins, but likewise for the sins of his spouse; for whom he implored pardon, giving her at the same time an example of penance, that she might imitate him in weeping for her own sins: the true and lawful wife ever shares the sentiments of her husband.

"I learned also that our Lord, seeing Himself loaded with the sins of the whole world, refused all consolations during His mortal life: never once was He seen to laugh; and not even the society of His holy Mother could divert Him from this abiding sorrow. He went on His way as though the impetuous torrents of our sins were perpetually rushing in upon Him and overwhelming Him; He wept without ceasing in His Heart, doing penance for His people, and imploring pardon continually for them in His prayers. For although these were not the only affections in which His soul was engaged, seeing He was filled also with the love and praises of His Father and with gratitude for the blessings granted to man, yet the spectacle of our sins was ever before His eyes, and this kept Him continually plunged in affliction. As I entertained myself with these thoughts, it pleased the goodness of my Master to communicate to me this interior disposition, and I seemed to be wholly possessed with it, feeling experimentally, not only this species of sadness, but also the deep humility in which I ought to live, and the lowly sentiments which ought to accompany that state; in fine, it seemed to me that I ought to be prepared in mind to suffer with the most perfect sweetness every conceivable outrage of which I might be made the object.

"On the third day of my retreat, continuing my meditation on the imitation of our Lord, of whom I was to be the living representative before the eyes of the faithful, I perceived that I ought to imitate His modesty. Now, this modesty has for its principle the respect due to God, and proceeds from the Holy Spirit, who, when He has possession of the body as well as of the soul, composes and keeps it in a state of perfect recollection, thereby inspiring all beholders with piety, and darting forth as many arrows of the love of God as there are hearts susceptible of the movements of charity. It must not be mundane in its nature, or the effect of self-complacency: this is the affected modesty of the old man; on the contrary, it must be a virtue of the new man, an exterior composure which has its source in that of Jesus Christ Himself, who, dwelling in us, diffuses it over our whole person, regulating our exterior after the pattern of His own—our very gait, our manner of speaking, eating, and all else: this is what is called Christian modesty. The excellence of this virtue appears in the powerful results which it produces, as in winning hearts and leading them to God; in a word, all those admirable effects of which St. Paul speaks (2 Cor. x. 1) when he beseeches the faithful 'by the modesty of Christ,' so mighty in influence over the minds of men.

"To-day I was taught that in the mystery of the Transfiguration, which we celebrated yesterday, our Lord spoke of His cross to show that He came principally with this object, to preach it to men, and that, moreover, as an excellent Master, He came to teach us the practice of it. This is why it is written in the Gospel of the day (St. Luke ix. 30, 31), '*Dicebant* * *excessum ejus*—They spoke of His decease:' here is the teaching of the Cross; '*quem completurus erat in Jeru-*

* Quoting from memory, M. Olier wrote *Loquebatur* instead of *Dicebant*, his mind, no doubt, reverting to the words *loquebantur cum illo* in the previous verse.

salem—which He should accomplish in Jerusalem :' here is the confirmation of the teaching by example. Yesterday, in my prayer, I beheld our Lord trodden under foot, struck, thrown to the ground, by the Jews, and I beheld myself in the same condition, treated in like manner by the world. At the same time I contemplated the interior disposition of our Lord, whilst He was enduring all these afflictions and sufferings. It was all ineffable sweetness and patience, a continual saying to Himself that He well merited this treatment, seeing He had taken the sins of all upon Himself; I saw that He had laden Himself, not only with the sins which men have committed against God, but with all those of which they have been guilty towards their neighbour, as robbery, treason, all the infidelities which thieves, servants, and subjects can commit against men, masters, and kings. Now, as a thief, or a faithless servant, taken in the very act, is maltreated and loaded with insults and ignominies, I learned that our Lord, having loaded Himself with all these kinds of sins, was pleased to bear the penalty and the just chastisement of them with equal sweetness and patience, and that so I also ought to resolve to bear all kinds of ignominies and insults, seeing that I was taking on myself the sins of all my flock, and to abandon myself as a victim into the hands of Divine Justice, to receive on my own person the chastisements destined for them.

"I cannot refrain from manifesting the love which our Lord gave me for His Cross during my prayer, and the great joy He caused me to experience in assuring me that in my ministry at St. Sulpice, on which I am about to enter, I should have a large share in it. This assurance quite transported me with joy, and constrained me to offer myself to His love with ardent aspirations and words like those of St. Andrew: '*O bona Crux, diu desiderata!*—(O good Cross, so long desired!).' To confirm me in the promise of this grace, it pleased God to renew before my mind the vision of a cross which He had already shown me, and which I am to carry when it is His will to lay it on my shoulders. I believe it is approaching, for I have heard that there is a certain person who is violently incensed against me, and threatens to publish libels against us, of which our director, it would appear, has already had some intimation. This morning, when I was engaged in fervent prayer, and was meditating on self-abandonment to crosses and sufferings, word was brought me that the Curé of St. Sulpice had retracted his promise concerning the transfer of his parish; then, without experiencing any movement of disappointment, I said to the bearer of these tidings, 'This news is very welcome, blessed be God for all things!' The goodness of my Master is thus pleased to put me in dispositions the most fitting to receive such crosses as on that particular day He had designed for me. The news, however, proved to be false.

"Ah! Lord, now that I see myself charged with the sins of all this people, said to be the most depraved in the whole world, if in Thy mercy Thou wouldst inspire me with those sentiments of humility, confusion, and self-annihilation which I ought to have by reason of this burden, O my Saviour, I would imitate Thee in Thy deep humiliation. Alas! ought I not to take great shame to myself, that, being Thy representative in the Church, I should have nothing in me which represents and reflects Thy virtues? On Friday, August 8th, in my morning prayer, I had so clear a perception of my own nothingness, and so intimate a conviction of it, that I said to my Master, that, but for my hope that He would Himself support for me the burden about to be laid upon me, I should fly to the ends of the earth rather than accept it, having in myself only nothingness, blindness, ignorance, weakness, and an utter incapacity to do Him any service. It

seemed to me that our Lord had inspired me with an utter horror of worldly honour; I earnestly implored Him to give me death rather than the praise of men, which I can in no wise accept; for my Saviour lived and died in the midst of confusion and contempt. Moreover, all my desire being to procure the glory of my Master, I cannot experience a greater pain than in receiving honour, seeing it is a good which belongs only to my God. Alas! O my God, to Thee be all honour and glory, and to me all confusion. If I could steal from Thee all the ignominy Thou endurest, and could restore to Thee all the honour of which Thou art robbed, I should be content. Vouchsafe, then, to be honoured by my confusion, seeing it is Thy pleasure to employ me for Thy greater glory, and that Thou desirest to ground it on my humiliation as a parish priest, a charge now fallen into contempt with all the functions belonging to it; in fine, on the ignominy which has always been promised to me in this condition.

"I am not astonished at the love which ought to be felt for the Church, and for the meanest of creatures, so far as such creature is a portion of that august body; for what more admirable than the Church? Rather, I am unable to conceive how it is that one does not die of love for the faithful, seeing that each shall be one day a component part of the Church triumphant, which shall praise the greatness of God to all eternity. While I was full of these thoughts they brought me a poor child, begging me to bestow some alms upon it. I do not know what I did not feel ready to do for it, regarding it as a member of that Church so admirable and so divine, that kingdom so perfect, that throne so magnificent of the adorable Majesty of God. O Goodness! what shall we not be willing to do for Thee? How readily would I shed my blood for Thy love,—yea, and if it were mine, the blood of all creatures!"

Part II.

REFORM OF THE PARISH OF ST. SULPICE.

CHAPTER I.

FRIGHTFUL STATE OF THE PARISH OF ST. SULPICE. M. OLIER ESTABLISHES A COMMUNITY OF PAROCHIAL CLERGY. RESTORATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL DISCIPLINE.

IN the first half of the 17th century the immorality and impiety which prevailed throughout Europe—consequent on the loosening of all the bonds of society which had attended that great revolt against the authority of the Church commonly called the Reformation—had reached such a height in France that, confounded at the spectacle which everywhere presented itself, wise and holy men had begun to fear that their country was about to lose the light of faith, as had befallen most of the northern nations. Thus St. Vincent de Paul, writing to M. d'Horgny, Superior of the Mission at Rome, says, "I fear that God is allowing the faith gradually to perish from among us on account of the depravity of manners, the novel opinions which are spreading more and more, and the generally evil state of things. During the hundred years last past it has lost the greater part of the Empire (of Germany), and the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Scotland, Ireland,* England, Bohemia, and Hungary. The loss of these Churches during the past hundred years gives us cause to fear that in another hundred years the Church will have altogether disappeared in Europe. For what we know, it may be the will of God to transfer the faith to heathen nations, which perhaps have preserved the innocence of their manners more than have the greater part of Christians, who have nothing less at heart than the sacred mysteries of our holy religion. For myself, I confess, this has been my opinion for a long time."

Of this demoralisation and corruption the quarter of Paris in which M. Olier was called to minister was a flagrant exemplification.

* That is, through the political ascendancy of Protestant England, for the Irish people had remained devotedly loyal to the Church.

The Faubourg St. Germain, which constituted the largest portion of the parish of St. Sulpice, was notorious at the time for the number of professed atheists and libertines who had made it their abode. In the previous century it had become the stronghold of the Calvinists; it was there they had erected their first conventicle, and had made their first public and most daring demonstrations. Hither they had continued to resort from all sides during the contest which desolated France, and such was the success of their proselytising efforts that this quarter of the town had acquired the name of the Little Geneva. The effect had been to undermine and destroy the faith of the people, to inspire them with a hatred of priests and a contempt for religious, and to make them regard whatever was expended in the support of the clergy and the decoration of the churches as so much which might have gone towards maintaining themselves in idleness and debauchery. The most horrible blasphemies were openly promulgated, while the essential doctrines of Catholicism, and even the first principles of natural religion, were rejected with scorn and derision. Christianity, in short, had come to be generally regarded as an invention of the governing powers, and its ministers as impostors or the paid agents of tyranny.

This monstrous impiety, with an inconsistency not uncommon, was associated with the most revolting superstition and a systematic practice of magic. Books on the diabolic art were publicly sold at the very doors of the church; and, shortly after M. Olier entered on the duties of the parish, the Bailly of the suburb, being in pursuit of three persons accused of sorcery, and mistaking one house for another, found an altar dedicated to the evil spirit, with these words inscribed upon it: "*Gratias tibi, Lucifer; gratias tibi, Beelzebub; gratias tibi, Azareel.*"* The altar was a sort of travesty of that consecrated to Catholic worship; the candles were black, the ornaments about it were all in keeping with its infernal object, and the book of prayers, as in mockery of the Missal, consisted of diabolical incantations. The Bailly took possession of the book,

* "Thanks to thee, Lucifer; thanks to thee, Beelzebub; thanks to thee, Azareel."

The impious men who at the present day, in France and Italy, pay public homage to Satan and invoke his aid cannot be said to believe either in his existence or in his power. They simply use his name as the symbol of their hatred of the Christian religion and of God. He is to them the impersonation of rebellion against the Supreme Lord of heaven and earth. But they are none the less his agents and his dupes.

but the affair was not prosecuted further on account of the numbers and position of those who were implicated. So prevalent also at this time had become the study of astrology that P. de Condren had thought it necessary to make himself acquainted with the mysteries of that false science, in order more effectually to disabuse the minds of those who were addicted to it, and at the request of Cardinal de Richelieu had even published a treatise to expose its folly and wickedness.*

But, though impiety and superstition abounded to so fatal an extent, these were but secret and partial evils as compared with the violence, the riot, the debauchery, the general lawlessness, for which this unhappy parish had gained so infamous a notoriety. The long-continued civil wars and the scandals of a dissolute court under preceding reigns had rendered Paris one of the most demoralized cities in the world; while the insufficient protection afforded to life and property by the municipal authorities had left the inhabitants a prey to bands of robbers and marauders, who traversed the streets at nightfall and set both laws and police at defiance. So intolerable at length had these outrages become that the citizens were ordered to keep weapons in their houses and hold themselves in readiness to sally out to the aid of the armed patrol. Compelled thus to seek a retreat from the vengeance of the laws, these miscreants took refuge in the Faubourg St. Germain, where they were sure of finding perfect security. Pursuit was no longer possible; for the whole parish enjoyed an immunity from the control of the magistracy of the city, being (as it has been said) subjected to the peculiar jurisdiction of the Abbé de St. Germain, by whom justice was feebly administered and most inadequately enforced. Moreover, the fair † which was held in this quarter, and which lasted two whole months in the year, conduced beyond all calculation towards fomenting the disorders. No tolls being exacted, vendors flocked thither from all parts of the country to display their wares; thieves, mountebanks, strollers, jugglers,—every panderer to vanity and crime was there to

* This treatise is given in the collected edition of his works to which reference has been made.

† The reader will not have forgotten that it was from the fair of St. Germain M. Olier and his young companions were returning when they were accosted by Marie Rousseau. It was opened annually on the 3rd of February, and commonly lasted till Passion Sunday. It retained its popularity till the year 1763, when a fire broke out and destroyed all the wooden structures which formed the shops and saloons.

ply his trade or exhibit his dexterity; booths were set up in the public thoroughfares; the people assembled in crowds, especially in the evenings, when the concourse was greatest, and the whole region became one wild scene of revelry and carousal, riot, frolic, and sin. Brawls, too, and assassinations were frequent; and such was the rage for duelling, which in the midst of so much license could be practised with the utmost facility and impunity, that during M. Olier's administration of the parish seventeen persons were mortally wounded in one week.

This frightful picture would be very incomplete without some mention of the condition of the clergy and of their ministrations. Amidst all this vast and lawless population the principal church was no larger than would have been suitable for some country village; and yet, small as it was, it was far too spacious for the congregation that frequented it. The interior was dirty and ill-kept; the pavement of the floor broken and uneven; the high altar naked and desolate; the walls were destitute of all ornament; and there was not even a sacristy, properly so called, to which the clergy could retire. In the celebration of the Divine Mysteries no order or punctuality was observed; the priests vested before the altar, and a bell, suspended at the entrance of each chapel, was rung to warn the faithful that Mass was beginning. The guilds were so numerous, and their meetings were held so frequently, that the clergy who had to attend their frivolous ceremonies were unable to devote the necessary time to the duties of the parish. The burial-ground, which was contiguous to the building, but unenclosed, was the favourite haunt of idlers and drunkards, while—will the fact be credited?—a tavern was kept in the very vaults of the church, to which even communicants were in the habit of resorting before returning to their homes; for an evil custom had grown up of the priests going there to give blessed bread and, what was a still more crying abuse, to receive what was called the confession-fee. But the scandal did not end there. The clergy themselves, instead of endeavouring to stem the tide of corruption, were foremost in setting an evil example to their people; and we learn from M. Bourdoise—in these express terms—that often, after offering the Tremendous Sacrifice, they spent the remainder of the day in this tavern in the vaults, eating and drinking to excess. When such were the priests who served the altar we cannot wonder that the officials about the church—the organist, the ringers, and the rest—were models neither of morality nor of religion. The suburb, in

short, was a sink of iniquity, and its church was become a den of thieves. "To name to you the Faubourg St. Germain," wrote M. Olier to a certain bishop, "is to express in one word all the monstrous vices that prey upon humanity." *

If the men to whom he would naturally have looked for co-operation in his pastoral labours were so little qualified or disposed to lend him their aid, he was to find no support or consolation in the great laymen of his parish. So far from his being able to look to them for sympathy and aid, they proved to be the most powerful patrons of evil and the most formidable opponents of reform. From the time that the Court took up its abode at the Louvre, all the great lords had built themselves mansions in the Faubourg St. Germain, and their presence was anything but an advantage to the cause of morality and piety. On the contrary, such was their utter neglect of the most sacred duties that, according to the different memoirs which have been consulted in this history, there was scarcely a noble house in which parents had their children taught the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His religion. The princes of the blood-royal had only too closely copied in their own practice the deplorable examples of preceding reigns. Gaston, Duc d'Orléans, brother of the King, who resided in the palace of the Luxembourg, was notorious for his impiety and, especially, for his habit of profane swearing; so that P. de Condren had said—in allusion to his being heir-presumptive to the crown—that God would sooner work a miracle than allow such a blasphemer, or his issue, to reign as sovereign of France: a prediction which seemed to find its fulfilment in the birth of a Dauphin three-and-twenty years after the marriage of Louis XIII. with Anne of Austria. The Duchesse d'Orléans, Marguerite de Lorraine, was, happily, a woman of sterling virtue, and succeeded ultimately (as we shall see) in reclaiming her husband from his evil courses, but at the time of which we are now speaking she was, as M. Faillon styles her, "a lily among thorns." A similar account may be rendered of the Princesse de Condé, Charlotte-Marguerite, daughter of the Constable

* M. de Bretonvilliers, in his Life of M. Olier, calls it "le cloacque de toutes les méchancetés de Paris, et une Babylone." The Père Giry declares it was "le lieu de retraite des libertins et de tous ceux qui vivaient dans l'impurité et dans le désordre." M. Baudrand in his *Mémoires* describes it as "un abime de désordres: l'hérésie, l'impiété, le libertinage, et l'impurité y régnaient; le peuple y était dans la dernière ignorance de nos mystères et de ses obligations." And the Dominican Père de Saint-Vincent writes that "les vices et le libertinage y regorgeaient de toutes parts."

Henri de Montmorency and wife of the Prince Henri de Bourbon,* whose hôtel was also in the parish of St. Sulpice. Her husband will be found taking an active part in the attempts that were made to expel M. Olier from his parish in order to put a stop to the reforms he had begun; while her children and, in particular, Louis de Bourbon, Duc d'Enghien, who was afterwards the Great Condé, had the misfortune of being brought into intimate relations with that versatile genius, the Seigneur de Saint-Evremond, who, if not a scoffer, was an avowed unbeliever.

And this, then, was the soil which the servant of God was called to cultivate, and these were his fellow-labourers and patrons! Not that it need be presumed that all the clergy of the parish had become so utterly depraved and so lost to all sense of shame as the above description would imply—indeed, the contrary incidentally appears—but few there were among them who possessed the true sacerdotal spirit, or who had any but a low professional view of the obligations of their sacred calling. His first efforts, therefore, were directed to raising these men out of the depth of degradation, or, at least, rousing them from the state of apathy, into which they had fallen by placing before them a higher and a holier standard; and to this end he would fain have led them to adopt a community life. But here, as may be well imagined, he encountered the most determined opposition; and there was cause to apprehend that, if he persisted in the attempt, an insurmountable wall of separation would be raised between the parochial clergy and the ecclesiastics whom he had brought with him from Vaugirard. His heart sank within him at the prospect that presented itself, and he was often tempted to throw up his office in despair. But the grace of God sustained him under the trial. It was given him to see that he must follow in the footsteps of our Blessed Lord when He conversed with men. "He was content" (he writes) "to preach and exhort the people and teach His disciples, who in turn were to teach the world and deliver it from sin. My Divine Master will vouchsafe to remove all obstacles from my path, and He inspires me with a hope that for Him and through Him I shall gain an entrance even into the hearts of the great people of this parish." He did not therefore relax his endeavours but, committing himself to God, summoned all the parish priests together and urged the

* Called indifferently Prince Henri de Bourbon and Prince Henri de Condé, and sometimes also Prince Henri de Bourbon-Condé.

proposal upon them in an address the substance of which he has left us in his writings.

He spoke of the irksomeness of a priest's existence when leading a solitary life in the world; the teasing distractions from which it is impossible for him to escape, and which haunt and hang about him even in the performance of his most sacred duties; the time, the thought, the care he must expend on the mere bodily wants of food, lodging, and clothing; and, on the other hand, he enlarged on the benefits which those who are specially set apart for God's service derive from associating with each other, as contrasted with the evils of mixing in secular society. "The association of priests with each other," he said, "is always of great advantage, since, as the Wise Man * expresses it, by such companionship the tepid are warmed, the blind are enlightened, the weak are strengthened; whereas intercourse with seculars, their conversation, their example, can have no other effect but that of chilling their hearts for the service of God. Sheep newly sheared go close to one another for warmth, and thus find shelter from the cold air that surrounds them. So ought priests to impart warmth to each other by their holy conversation and their mutual conferences, and defend themselves against the chilling influences of the world, amidst which their state obliges them to live." He then descanted on the principle of association in general, whether in cities or in families: that it has the approval and sanction of Heaven and is, as it were, an image of the Indivisible Unity of the Three Divine Persons; that in the beginning of creation God formed the community of angels, consisting of three hierarchies, themselves also a figure of the same ineffable mystery and the order and communication subsisting therein; and that, all on fire with the love of God and glowing with mutually engendered heat and fervour, these blessed spirits cry continually, "Holy, Holy, Holy." "Now the priests of God," he continued, "are His visible angels, whom He invites to join together in serving and honouring Him. He would have them mutually inflame each other with divine love, speaking one to the other of His perfections, extolling His goodness, adoring His greatness, and glorifying with one accord His infinite sanctity. Seeing, then, that God desires to be honoured by societies, let us not refuse Him this glory: *Venite, exultemus Domino, jubilemus Deo salutari nostro;* † and all together, with one heart, one voice, one

* Comp. Eccles. iv. 9–12.

† "O come, let us exult in the Lord, let us rejoice before God our Saviour." Psalm xciv. 1.

mouth, offer to the Divine Majesty our jubilations, our praises, and our homage."

On some few of his auditors this discourse produced the desired effect, but the greater part, including the oldest and best qualified of M. de Fiesque's former colleagues, refused to acquiesce in the plan proposed. Foiled, therefore, in his endeavours to persuade the parochial clergy to live with him in community, he sought to recruit his establishment by an addition of fresh members and, as usual, had recourse to the powerful assistance of the Blessed Virgin; begging her to gather about him a company of ecclesiastics who, in a spirit of entire disinterestedness and detachment from the world, would be content to regard the community, not as the vestibule to honours and preferment, but as a school of sacerdotal science and virtue, where they might labour solely for the glory of God. His prayer received a speedy and an effectual answer; for the community, which was composed at first of the twenty ecclesiastics who had removed from Vaugirard, of seven or eight others who had since joined them, and of four of the parochial clergy of St. Sulpice, soon numbered fifty members, all men conspicuous for their zeal and fervour. M. du Ferrier was made superior of the community; to M. de Foix was committed the general superintendence of all that concerned the relief of the poor; while M. de Bassancourt regulated the service of the altar and whatever was connected with the order and beauty of divine worship; all three acting as M. Olier's representatives, and under his direction and control.

Their life was now ordered according to the strictest rules of ecclesiastical discipline. All the fees received in the ordinary course of their ministry were to be thrown into a common fund, and each was to be content with what was sufficient to provide him with food and clothing. M. Olier particularly enjoined that no fee should be charged for administering the Holy Viaticum, and that on no account should money be accepted in the tribunal of penance, an abuse which prevailed in certain parishes, both at Paris and elsewhere. Finding themselves thus deprived of what they had come to regard as the rightful emoluments of their office, the parochial clergy called on M. Olier to indemnify them for the loss. This he consented to do, but at the cost of nearly all the remaining fees to which he was entitled. On accepting the charge of St. Sulpice, he had resolved to resign his abbey of Pébrac and his priory of Bazainville, but, having surrendered the customary fees, he would have found himself destitute of wherewithal to support his community had he

put his design into execution. Nevertheless he would have made the sacrifice but for the remonstrances of his directors, who represented the need he had of the revenues of these benefices in order to carry out the reform of the parish with the help of his associates.

The opposition he encountered in no wise diminished his affectionate solicitude for those who were its authors; on the contrary, it seemed to operate as a motive for lavishing on them every mark of confidence and respect. His generous faith and love of mortification conspired to make him regard as his best friends those who gave him occasions of suffering; and we read in his *Mémoires* that he offered on their behalf to God all the pains he endured in a severe illness with which he was at this time afflicted, and expressed his readiness to undergo much greater sufferings for their sakes. So far, too, was he from showing a preference or giving a precedence to the members of his community that he maintained all the parish clergy in their former rank and office, and, for fear that they might be led to go elsewhere and fall into worse disorders, he even increased their stipends without making any exceptions. He strove, in turn, to win their regard and confidence by every manner of kindness and attention in his power; always paying them honour, as the oldest of his clergy, inviting them to his table, consulting them on the management of parochial affairs, and informing himself as to their circumstances, so that all might be properly provided with clothing, lodging, and furniture, as well as supplied with whatever was needful in case of illness. The consequence of all this privation, on the one hand, and of liberality, on the other, was that the Community were constrained to embrace a life of evangelical poverty; the priests who had private means contributed out of their superfluity to the support of their less provided brethren,* and by common consent a rule was adopted not to accept from the poorest parishioners the customary fees. From M. du Ferrier we learn the sort of diet which was usual among them. "It was endeavoured," he writes, "to accustom our priests to a frugal and simple mode of living. At dinner they had a basin of soup and a small plate of boiled meat, without any dessert, and in the evening a little roast mutton." M. Bourdoise, indeed, was disposed to banter them on the subject of their viands, as being too luxurious for the future

* Thus M. Joly, a most exemplary priest, who afterwards became Bishop of Agen, not only was maintained free of cost to himself, but received 300 crowns a year for the support of his parents, who resided in Lorraine.

village Curé, who would never be able to afford himself such dainty fare in a poor country parish. But, after all (as M. du Ferrier observes), he was fain to confess that anything less sufficient would not have been expedient, seeing that all fared alike.

M. Olier himself presented an edifying example in his own person of that simplicity of life and love of poverty by which he wished his institute to be distinguished; appropriating nothing to himself of all the proceeds of his benefice, but applying one portion of them to the relief of the poor, another to the maintenance of the clergy, and a third to the support of the community; thus (as he says) giving to those who were in want, and supplying those who wanted not with means for giving to our Lord, whether in His Church or in His poorer members. His dress, like that of the rest, was such as became the priest, but always of the simplest kind, his habit being of common serge, and his under-garments of materials still coarser; neither would he permit his surplices to be trimmed with lace; a rule which has continued to be observed in the Seminary down to the present day.

To take away every occasion of scandal, on which the dissolute or unfriendly might seize, it was forbidden to give admission to females under any pretext whatever. At first, indeed, M. Olier collected the ladies of the parish together for the purpose of consulting them on the pious and charitable works which should be established in the Faubourg, but from the year 1643 they were admitted only into the exterior parlours and into one of the rooms in the Presbytery set apart for such meetings, and were not allowed entrance either into the Seminary or into the house of the Community. So strictly, indeed, was the prohibition enforced that M. de Bretonvilliers, when he was ill, would not permit his own sister, the Présidente de Bailleul, to come into his chamber, and, although she had got as far as the ante-room, she was obliged to go down again; and M. Picoté, who lodged near the great gate of the Seminary, could not obtain permission to see his penitents in his room, although he was unable to descend the stairs without great bodily pain. M. Olier also made it a rule that ecclesiastics who were summoned to the parlours by females who sought their advice, should always present themselves in surplice and square cap, and that the interview should be short and quickly despatched.

In order to make his clergy look upon themselves simply as the servants of the people, devoted to their spiritual interests, he would

have no distinction observed between one priest and another; all were equally to employ themselves in the various functions of the ministry, each in his order performing those offices which, in the eyes of the world, were esteemed the least honourable. No one, for instance, was to be dispensed from carrying the cross at funerals, accompanying the priest when called to administer Extreme Unction, or walking before the Blessed Sacrament with the bell when It was borne to the sick and the dying. This last-mentioned office was always to be performed by one in priest's orders, who was to see that the bystanders bent their knee in adoration, and, if any neglected this mark of homage, he was then and there to admonish them of their duty; a practice which was continued without interruption until the Revolution.* Ecclesiastics, whether beneficed or otherwise, who, with the permission of their bishops, came into residence for a while, to be more perfectly instructed in their pastoral duties, were subjected to the same discipline. The wills of all were to be in entire submission to the will of the Superior, who—to use M. Olier's forcible metaphor—was to hold them at his disposal like so many arrows in a quiver, either to remain by his side, or to be sent hither and thither at his pleasure. They were to yield a ready obedience, not only to the Curé himself, but to all who shared his authority; to the Superior of the Community, the sacristan, the master of ceremonies, and the very doorkeeper, in all things which concerned their respective offices and were in accordance with the rules. Even bishops who might wish to go into retreat, or to have the benefit of a quiet habitation when affairs detained them at Paris, were obliged to conform to all the regulations of the house; as, for instance, in being present at morning prayer and observing the canonical hours. No one was exempted without positive necessity; and such was the regularity and order which prevailed that they who

Even as late as the second half of the 18th century, an instance is on record of a priest of St. Sulpice, who was preceding the Blessed Sacrament, stopping with his own hand a cabriolet the driver of which had attempted to pass without paying the accustomed mark of respect. The man, it may be added, had to make public reparation for his offence.

In all this there was nothing remarkable or singular; it was but a remnant of the devotion which had been inherited from the ages of faith; kings and emperors having been wont, on meeting a priest bearing the Viaticum to the sick, to alight from their carriages and, placing them at the disposal of their Incarnate God, themselves accompany Him on foot: an act of piety which Cardinals and the Sovereign Pontiff himself have never failed to observe down to the present day.

were prevented from attending by other avocations were careful to make up the arrears of the exercises they had been compelled to omit, as soon as they found themselves at liberty. This fidelity M. Olier assured them was the surest means of maintaining a spirit of recollection and union with God in the midst of occupations, however multifarious and distracting; and that without this spirit of recollection and of union there could be no fruit, whether in preaching, hearing confessions, holding spiritual conferences, or performing any of the other duties of their ministry. His instructions on all these points, as well as on union amongst themselves, charity towards the poor, sweetness and patience with their parishioners, love of humiliations, and zeal for the salvation of souls, formed a volume of considerable size.

Looking upon his parish as God's estate which he was set to administer, M. Olier divided it into eight districts, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin under the titles of her respective festivals. These eight divisions he assigned to as many of his priests, who had the especial charge of the inhabitants within its limits, associating with them ten or twelve others as their coadjutors. A list of the several households, with a statement of their necessities, spiritual and temporal, was to be kept by the priests of each quarter, and to be revised every three months. They were to make themselves personally acquainted with the poor and ignorant, to seek out those who neglected the sacraments, or gave occasion of scandal by their immorality, and apply a remedy to all such disorders. For this end also he appointed in each street some person of piety whose duty it was to give information as to any haunts of vice and iniquity, in order to their suppression. From these lists he compiled a general survey of the whole parish, as recommended by Pope Paul V., under the title, *De statu animarum*, a form of which was drawn up by St. Charles Borromeo and inserted among the *Acts of the Church of Milan*. So careful was he to provide for the needs of the sick and dying that he strictly charged the priests of each district to see that all who were in danger of death were visited every day, and that those whose state was precarious were not left for two days together without spiritual assistance. Besides these priests of the districts, there were others whose special duty it was to administer the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Extreme Unction; others were appointed to baptize and solemnize marriages; others to bury the dead; or, again, to be in readiness to give advice to the people and

receive their confessions at any hour of the day. In short, each had his particular office assigned to him, and a complete system was thus organized which might be made to bear with most powerful effect on all the wants of so vast a parish.

Even the time of recreation was made subservient to the purpose of mutual edification and instruction. After dinner it was the practice to propose to the Superior any questions arising out of cases of difficulty which had occurred in the parish, whether relating to some point of morality, controversy with heretics, or the conduct of souls. If the Superior were in doubt as to the solution, he commissioned some doctor of the Community to go to the Sorbonne and obtain a reply, which he was to communicate to the assembled members at supper-time. These conferences were of the greatest service to all, being equivalent (says M. du Ferrier) to a large amount of study. One principal advantage, however, was that they conduced more than anything else to establish in the Community a thorough unity of spirit in all that concerned the direction of souls. M. Olier, in concert with the rest, drew up a series of maxims or general principles, which might serve as the basis and touchstone of all their decisions, and to which individually they should be bound to conform. Among these were two which bore directly on one of the greatest practical evils of the time. It was laid down as a rule, from which no one should be at liberty to depart, that absolution should be refused to such as remained in a proximate occasion of sin, and that in the case of habitual sinners absolution should be deferred for eight or fifteen days.* These regulations were rendered

* This statement seems to call for remark. No theologian now holds that a person who for the first time confesses a habit of sin is to be refused absolution. Yet such a person is technically called *habitudinarius*. Therefore, it would be incorrect to state broadly that habitual sinners ought not to be absolved, or their absolution deferred. The principle of St. Alphonsus is this: Absolution ought always to be refused to *recidivi* (relapsing sinners), unless they show extraordinary signs of contrition, to counterbalance the *primâ facie* presumption against them, arising from the habit. However, amongst these extraordinary signs of contrition he reckons some which are by no means extraordinary, in the sense of being infrequent; as, for instance, spontaneous confession, that is, the penitent's coming to confession without external motive: *e.g.* at other times than Easter, or Christmas, or other principal feasts of the Church. On this principle, absolution may at once be given to a *recidivus* who comes to confession of his own free will, supposing, of course, that the priest also sees in him the ordinary signs of contrition. No such rule, therefore, as M. Olier made could possibly be made now, however justifiable it may have been under the particular circumstances at the time.

[This note was supplied by the late Father Dalgairns of the London Oratory.]

necessary by the lax morality then in vogue among the professors of casuistry, and by the dangerous facility with which many confessors administered the sacrament of penance. This abuse had led to another no less pernicious,—an excessive severity, calculated to drive souls to despair. M. Olier would have his priests observe the true and salutary mean between the two extremes, and gave them for their guidance the *Instructions of St. Charles Borromeo to the Confessors of his Diocese*, included among the *Acts of the Church of Milan*, which, under his directions, were now published for the first time in France. The edition was dedicated to the doctors of the Sorbonne, and was productive of untold benefits to the Church. The *Instructions* became the standard book of authority in the Seminaries, and, eventually, among the whole body of the clergy, who, in 1657, caused them to be printed at their own expense. M. Olier also constituted St. Charles patron of his parish priests, and obtained from the Holy See a plenary indulgence for his feast day; and yet he did not propose him to his clergy as the model of the pastoral life, considering the virtues he exhibited so lofty and sublime as to be inaccessible to the ordinary grade of priests. He preferred St. Martin, whose life was of a less austere and rigorous cast, although he practised mortification and abstinence in such measure as his condition allowed. With him he joined, as examples of evangelical peace and sweetness, St. Sulpice, surnamed *Le Débonnaire*, and his own spiritual father, Francis de Sales, the holy Bishop of Geneva.

Soon after his entrance on his pastoral duties, when already an evident impression had been made on the people but before he had obtained his full complement of auxiliaries, he felt how impossible it would be, with the number of priests at his disposal, to provide for the spiritual wants of the faithful during the Paschal season. In his perplexity, he addressed himself to St. Sulpice, as patron of the parish, on his feast day, January 17th, 1643, with a confident assurance that he would be heard. Nor was he disappointed therein; for the thought came into his mind to invite a certain number of the doctors of the Sorbonne to lend him their aid, and also to apply to the Superiors of the several religious communities in the Faubourg for priests who were qualified to hear confessions. Hitherto, unhappily, there had existed but little concord and joint action between the religious of the Faubourg and the clergy of St. Sulpice; the latter looking upon those whom they ought to have regarded as their natural allies and coadjutors rather in the light of

rivals and inconvenient neighbours; and thus, instead of working together for the spiritual good of the people, the two parties were for ever wrangling with each other about their respective rights and privileges. This miserable state of things was henceforth to cease. Sensibly touched by the charity and zeal of the new pastor, the heads of the religious houses cordially responded to his appeal and sent each two competent priests to assist him in his Easter duties. Fearing, however, that all these doctors and religious, the latter being members of different Orders, might not follow the same system of spiritual direction, and that injurious effects might thence ensue, he assembled them together three days previously and laid before them in detail the maxims and instructions which St. Charles had given for the guidance of confessors in the tribunal of penance. Thus a general uniformity of practice was established with the happiest results. "These good religious," he wrote, "who are associated with us have entered thoroughly into our views and sentiments. There is no diversity of principle between priests and religious; all are at one; all follow the same maxims; and, however various their exterior may be, all are perfectly united in their interior dispositions. God has chosen these holy souls to be our succour and support in this time of desolation. Ah! all that is needed is charity, simplicity, and humility: this it is which wins hearts, and nothing can resist the Spirit of God, who binds together all things in Himself." M. Olier entertained a sincere love and admiration for all the religious Orders, but he specially affected the two novitiate houses of the Dominicans and the Jesuits, in which sound doctrine and solid piety flourished side by side; and he would often say that, if the Divine Mercy shed down so many graces on his parish and effected every day so many fresh conversions, they were the fruit of the prayers of those two holy Communities.

One rule M. Olier had prescribed to himself, to which he ever faithfully adhered, that in all things he should set the example to his ecclesiastics. To this end he lived with them in common, took part in the same exercises, and was ever among them as one of themselves. Like a good pastor and a true superior, he was ready to sacrifice his goods, his health, his life, for those of whom he had the direction and the charge. Mindful of the vow of perpetual servitude which he had made to his parish, he regarded his people as the rightful masters of his time, his person, and all that he possessed, to make such use of them as their needs required;

and, absolute and all-embracing as such an engagement was, it never caused him the least disquietude,—proof incontestable that it had the approval of God. Convinced, moreover, that in his twofold character of pastor and superior he could not present before others too high a standard, he made, in addition, a formal vow of doing from that moment whatever he believed to be the most perfect. This heroic determination, which made itself felt in all his actions, enkindled a corresponding degree of zeal and fervour in the members of his Community; and though, in obedience to the light he had received in his retreat, he never addressed any of them in terms of command, nevertheless he obtained from them the most generous sacrifices by the sole ascendancy of his example. Were it question of visiting the sick, hearing confessions, preaching the word of God, he was always ready to take the place of his colleagues and spare them labour and fatigue. It was his desire that the priests who had come with him from Vaugirard and, in particular, M. du Ferrier, whom he had made superior of the Community, should display a similar spirit; and in this he was not disappointed, as the following instances may show. One night the porter informed M. du Ferrier that a sick person required the immediate attendance of a priest; after learning the particulars of the case, which the porter was instructed always to obtain, he sent him to one of the Community whom he deemed most fitted for the office, with a request that he would go forthwith and visit the sick man. The priest, however, feeling himself somewhat indisposed, begged to be excused at so late an hour; upon which, without further delay, M. du Ferrier went himself. The next morning, when the priest heard that the Superior had discharged the office he had himself declined, he was extremely distressed, and the more so when, on going to express his regret at what had happened, he was met only with an apology that he should have been disturbed at a time when he was not quite well. When the same thing had occurred seven or eight times in other cases, such a spirit of generous emulation was aroused in the Community that every summons, whether to attend the sick or to perform any other ministerial duty, was obeyed with the utmost alacrity, and no one, for any consideration whatever, would have suffered another to supply his place. A few months after the establishment of the Community, one of the members, M. Corbel, who of his own choice had undertaken the task of awakening the inmates in the morning, was sent by M. Olier to Pébrac, to pursue the work of reformation

so much needed there. Nevertheless everything went on as usual, and it never occurred to any to inquire who it was that knocked at their door and placed a light in their room, until one day, at recreation, they began to speculate among themselves who it could be, and, as one after another denied all cognisance of the matter, they discovered that it was the Superior himself who, for five or six weeks, had volunteered to perform the troublesome office. This little incident had a most powerful effect in quickening the zeal of the Community and stimulating its members to still greater efforts of self-denial.

The one dominant desire of M. Olier's heart, the one engrossing purpose of his life, in fulfilment of the mission he had received from God, was the sanctification of the sacerdotal order and, by means of the pastors, the renovation of the flock. His own words will best exhibit the sentiments which animated him. "O Lord," he writes, "if we behold the Orders of Thy saints reflourishing, if we see prayer reigning supreme among the Carmelites, zeal for souls among the Dominicans, the love of God among the Augustinians, the spirit of retirement and death to the world among the Benedictines, in fine, if we see all the Religious Orders regaining their pristine fervour, shall Thy own alone be left desolate? Wilt Thou not build up again Thy house, which has fallen into ruin? Lord, Thou art its head, Thou art its founder: other Orders have men for their patrons; wilt Thou leave Thy own to perish? O Lord Jesus, true Shepherd of the Universal Church, apply a speedy remedy to her needs; raise up those who may renew the divine Order of pastors, with as much zeal and love as St. Dominic showed when he established his Order in Thy Church. Enkindle with the fire of Thy love and Thy religion men who may carry and disseminate it through the whole world. If I were not so wretched and so proud, if I were not a very mass of filth and defilement, willingly would I offer myself to Thee to serve Thee in Thy Church in whatever way might please Thee, in all the fullness of my heart would I devote and abandon myself to Thee, as henceforth I do, like a broken vessel. I have vowed to Thee an absolute servitude, and I have done so beyond recall. I am Thine without reserve; and now I give myself to Thee anew, without retaining any right whatever to revoke the gift which I make of myself to Thee. Thou wilt dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure, as a lord and master disposes of a vassal or a slave."

In all, therefore, that he undertook M. Olier had regard, not only to the reformation of his own people, but also to the good of the Church at large; and his joy and thankfulness may well be imagined when, only fifteen days after his installation at St. Sulpice, he received a visit from an ecclesiastic who had been deputed by the parochial clergy of the metropolis to assure him of their sympathy and confidence, and to beg him to attend their monthly conferences. They at the same time requested that he would make them acquainted with the rules he had adopted, that they might profit by them in the conduct of their own parishes. Indeed, scarcely had the first year of his ministry expired before several of the Parisian Curés begged him to provide them with priests to assist in the evangelisation of their parishes; and, as the members of his Community were under no engagement to remain at St. Sulpice, he was able in some instances, with the sanction of ecclesiastical superiors, to comply with the request. In all this he seemed to see (as he says) that in making him Curé of St. Sulpice it was the will of Heaven that the other parishes of Paris should be modelled after the fashion of his own.* "God be blessed" (he continues) "that I have found favour in the eyes of these my brethren, and may He give me grace to be faithful to His mercies. For myself, I shall ever abide in my own littleness: this it is, as I clearly see, which has gained me their hearts. O my God, how mighty is Thy Spirit! what powerful effects does It produce in souls! In speaking to them, I am sensibly conscious that it is Thy Spirit within me which speaks to them, and in the presence of these great doctors I feel like a child of whom Thou art pleased to make use for communicating to them Thy lights."

M. Olier was still only in his thirty-fifth year, and it was with surprise and confusion, inspired by the sense he entertained of his own ignorance and unworthiness, that he found himself consulted by persons of greater age and experience than himself, some even holding

* Thus Abelly, who in the year 1644 became Curé of St. Josse and was afterwards Bishop of Rodez, says, in his Life of St. Vincent de Paul, that the institute founded by M. Olier became the model on which other parishes were organised, with the admiration and applause of all Paris; and, indeed, he was himself the first to follow M. Olier's example in forming his clergy into an ecclesiastical community. M. Godeau, Bishop of Vence, writing in 1660, says that in the greater number of the parishes of Paris the clergy adopted the plan of St. Sulpice, and lived together in community to their own edification and that of their people.

responsible offices in Church or State, on affairs of the highest moment. Thus, in this present year (1643), several of the Bishops most conspicuous for their activity and zeal sought his advice on the subject of establishing seminaries in their dioceses; and, after the death of Louis XIII., which occurred on the 14th of May, the Queen Regent resolved that no ecclesiastic should be nominated to the episcopate who had not passed some years in the seminary of St. Vincent de Paul or in that of St. Sulpice.

CHAPTER II.

M. OLIER'S REFORMS AT ST. SULPICE.

THE Apostolic life which M. Olier and his colleagues presented to the world must, no doubt, have had a great effect in preparing minds for the reception of their ministry, but example was not sufficient for a people so utterly depraved and hardened in vice as were a large majority of the inhabitants of St. Sulpice. What they needed was the Gospel of an Incarnate God preached in all its sublime simplicity, for this alone has power to vanquish and transform the hearts of men, whatever may be their position in life, learned or unlearned, rich or poor. M. Olier would, therefore, have Christian doctrine taught and expounded in its plainest form, and the teaching and the actions, the divinely human actions, of the Man-God set before the people as the source and spring whence alone they could derive the light of truth to guide their steps and the grace to overcome themselves and save their souls. And to example and teaching he added one thing more, without which all else would have been of little or no avail, prayer—fervent and unintermitted prayer. Not content with humbling himself before God for the sins of his people, he never ceased imploring Him to grant them His pardon and His grace; beseeching our Divine Lord (as M. Faillon has it) "by all the steps He took in His weary journeys on earth, to turn away the feet of sinners from the paths of vice; by His fastings, His hungering and thirsting, to give them a distaste for the gross pleasures of eating and drinking; by His sorrows, to inspire them with a hatred of the criminal joys of sin; by His holy words, to put to silence their evil discourse; by His self-abasement and humility, to destroy their pride and vanity; by His death, to restore them to life; in a word, to apply to sinners the good He had wrought for them, and put an end to the evils which were so dominant in his parish, especially to those vices which were making the greatest ravages, gluttony and impurity."

So neglected hitherto had been the sacred ordinance of preaching and, in particular, that most necessary duty of catechising, that children and parents, young and old, were equally ignorant of the rudiments of Christian doctrine ; many, it would appear, not even knowing the words of the Creed. M. Olier, therefore, began by instituting a series of catechetical instructions in twelve different localities besides the parish church. These catechisings, with the exception of those which were given at St. Sulpice, and which he undertook himself, were entrusted to the seminarists, two being appointed to each locality. Of these, one was called the *clerk*, and acted as the other's assistant ; going through the streets with a bell, to call the children to the classes, and even seeking them in the houses of their parents. Other ecclesiastics visited the various schools in the parish, which were already numerous, to ascertain that none of the youth within its limits were deprived of Christian teaching. A sight so novel in that neglected quarter as that of young men in surplices, many of them known to belong to the best families in France,* gathering poor children together for instruction, produced the liveliest sensation among the people ; and crowds were drawn by curiosity to see and hear what was going forward. This was a result which M. Olier had directly contemplated, and care was taken to conduct the catechisings in such a way that they should be profitable to persons of all ages. The success surpassed all expectation ; in a few weeks his clergy had as many as four thousand children under their immediate care, who became in their turn missionaries and catechists to their friends and relatives. Every week, also, instructions were given preparatory to first communion ; and he moreover required, what at that time was an innovation on existing practice, that all who were candidates for the sacrament of Confirmation should pass an examination before being admitted to that rite.

Priests were specially selected to hear the general confessions of the younger members of the flock ; nor, in spite of his numerous avocations, did the Curé disdain himself to receive any who chose to come to him. On the contrary, they experienced in him all the

* This custom continued to be observed long after M. Olier's death, as incidentally appears from the Life of M. de Moutiers de Mérinville, Bishop of Chartres, who was celebrated for his pastoral zeal and devoted charity. His family were so averse to his entering the ecclesiastical state that, when he was a seminarist at St. Sulpice, the Duchesse d'Aumont used to close her windows whenever she was made aware by the sound of the bell that her son was summoning the children to catechism. He died May 10th, 1748.

affectionate solicitude of a parent; his manner towards children (as before observed) was characterized, not so much by a gracious condescension as by a sort of gentle deference, which inspired confidence while it touched the heart; and he strove to trace on their tender souls the first lineaments of the new man, as modelled before their eyes in the Infant Jesus, subject to His parents and advancing daily in wisdom and in grace. At the same time he knew how to mingle severity with sweetness, and did not fail to reprove their faults when reproof was needed; yet ever with a tact and a delicacy to which their young minds were peculiarly sensitive. A slight incident which has chanced to remain on record may serve to illustrate this. He was kneeling one day before the Blessed Sacrament when a little girl of the higher classes came to make a request of him. There was something in her dress and manner which struck him as savouring too much of the fashionable world, and he gently remarked upon it at the moment. The better, however, to cure her of her affectation, he continued for some time after to call her *mademoiselle* when speaking to her, instead of *my child*, as he had been used to do. The little girl was sensible of the change, and one day begged him, with tears in her eyes, to call her by the old endearing name. "When you have the manners of a Christian child," he answered, "you will find me as affectionate as ever."

The good effects of all this careful training were visible in the general communion which was made by the children this same year, and which acted as a sweet and touching invitation to the parents themselves to frequent the sacraments so long neglected. Nor were these effects confined to the Faubourg St. Germain; the city parishes adopted the same practice, and a regular system of catechising was thus established in the capital which was gradually extended to all the large towns of France and has continued to the present day. M. Olier also selected from among the boys who were under instruction, whether in the schools or at the catechisings, such as were most commendable for their assiduity and good conduct, and employed them in serving Mass, singing in choir, or taking part in the general offices of the church. He taught them to look upon their employment about the altar as that which the very angels—on account of the unspeakable greatness of the August Sacrifice—would regard as the most honourable ministry which could be allotted to them, and bade them render themselves by their modesty and piety more worthy of the privilege which had been conferred upon them.

And such apt scholars in this school of godliness did these children show themselves, that their recollected air and reverent demeanour inspired beholders with an interior devotion to which their minds had hitherto been strangers. Meanwhile, M. Picoté, in conjunction with other priests, was establishing congregations of young girls, associated together under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin, by which they were formed to habits of piety and virtue and led to encourage and support each other in the practice of their religious duties.

In fact, there was not a single class among his people which did not find itself the object of his particular care. Thus, in addition to the exhortations contained in the sermons which were common to all, he desired that the servants of the parish should receive separate instructions adapted to their condition and circumstances. Three times a week during Lent he assembled the pages and footmen, who were very numerous in the Faubourg St. Germain; and, not content with making an announcement from every pulpit in the parish, he directed the priests in charge of each district to distribute handbills from house to house, that neither masters nor servants might remain in ignorance of their duty. On three other days he summoned all the beggars together, and taught them in detail all the mysteries of the faith, and the means by which they might sanctify their state of life and receive with profit to their souls the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. On every such occasion there was a distribution of alms, according to the attention and proficiency displayed by each; the numbers collected amounting commonly to three or four hundred, sometimes even more. Nor were the aged poor forgotten: the old men of the parish had special instructions provided for them every Friday; and, to encourage them to attend, every one received relief in proportion to his needs and merits; this true disciple of Christ following herein (as his biographer observes) the example of his Divine Master, who deferred distributing bodily food to those who had gathered round Him in the desert until He had nourished their souls with the bread of life.

In addition to this, he provided what was called a general catechism, intended for all sorts of persons. This was given at the church, and that none might be kept away by a feeling of shame, the language employed was always of a higher order; without derogating, however, from that plainness and simplicity which is suited to all capacities. And even yet his zeal and charity were not exhausted. He directed his ecclesiastics to visit from time to time

those families who hitherto had lived in ignorance of the truths of salvation, and were withheld by motives of human respect from attending the public teaching. He had a number of broad-sheets printed, embellished with some device or picture, explanatory of the chief doctrines of the faith and the necessary duties of a Christian, with forms of prayer for night and morning and a mode of sanctifying the common actions of the day by offering them all to God. These familiar instructions he recommended fathers and mothers to hang up in some conspicuous place in their houses, and to use them every day for themselves and their families. Lastly, he established a series of short and simple discourses for workpeople, which were delivered in the early morning,* in order that they might be able to attend; and again, at the end of the day, some profitable reading was given, accompanied by a verbal commentary, a custom which, ere long, was adopted in all the parishes of the city.

But, besides making provision for the poor and ignorant, his care was also directed to those who occupied the position of teachers, many of whom were themselves in need of instruction. Schoolmasters and schoolmistresses were examined as to their proficiency, and trained for the due discharge of their important office. Availing himself also of the powers which the laws accorded him, he assembled the midwives of his parish, in order to ascertain that they were sufficiently acquainted with the form of administering baptism; at the same time he urged upon them the duty of fulfilling their calling in such a way as should best conduce to the spiritual profit of those whom they assisted. He gave them forms of prayer which they could recite either with or for the objects of their care, and taught them how to suggest to the poor women modes of lifting up their hearts to God, making acts of contrition, accepting their pains as the chastisement of sin, and bearing them with willingness, as being more pleasing to the Divine justice than any voluntary mortifications, however severe. Above all, he gave strict charge that, previous to the time of their delivery, they should be urged to make their confession and receive communion, that they might not be surprised by death without being fortified by the sacraments of Holy Church.

Another object of his solicitude, and one which was recommended

* These exercises were usually conducted by M. Dardène, who was also distinguished by his ability as a controversialist. He first spent two hours before the Tabernacle, and then at four o'clock in the morning (during summer) commenced his instructions.

to him by the peculiar circumstances of his parish, was the conversion of Protestants. It abounded (as has been said) in Calvinists; the Lutherans, also, had congregated there in great numbers. The latter sectaries were prohibited by the laws from holding their conventicles within the realm; M. Olier, however, might have left them in peace but for an abominable sacrilege which they were in the habit of committing. While adhering to their own heresy, and blasphemously impugning the Catholic faith, they made a practice of receiving communion clandestinely at the church of St. Sulpice. Justly indignant at so outrageous an insult to the Adorable Mystery of the Altar, M. Olier endeavoured, in the first instance, to arrest the evil by obtaining an exact register of the houses they occupied, with a view to acquiring a personal knowledge of the inmates. This plan, however, proving of no avail, as they were able to baffle inquiry by continually changing their place of meeting, he determined to seek the assistance of the secular power; and, having first solicited the protection of the Duke of Orleans, he proceeded with the Bailly of the suburb and two guards, provided by the Duke, to a house which had been designated to him. Here, as he expected, he found three or four hundred persons assembled, whom he immediately dispersed. The Lutherans attempted to continue their meetings elsewhere; but, unable to evade M. Olier's untiring vigilance, they were compelled at length to evacuate the parish.

But the weapons with which he desired to combat against heresy were not carnal but spiritual: perseverance in prayer, a sweet and tender charity, and the force of a persuasive eloquence addressed to the mind and conscience of those whom he sought to win. To remove the intellectual obstacles to their conversion, he instituted public and private conferences, which were blessed with remarkable success; but here, too, the humility which marked whatever he did was as conspicuous as his zeal. Writing to St. Vincent de Paul, he begs him, for the love of God, to send him M. Lucas, one of his priests, to confer with a Huguenot, who had urged objections to which he had found himself, owing to his great ignorance, unable to reply, and generally to instruct him in the mode of dealing with heretics. To assist him in his arduous task, he also engaged the services of the ablest controversialist of the day, the celebrated Père Véron,*

* Author of the well-known treatise on *The Rule of Catholic Faith*, an English translation of which, from the original Latin, was published by the Rev. J. Waterworth in 1833.

whose logical subtlety and caustic irony rendered him the scourge and dread of the teachers of error. On leaving the Society of Jesus, he had been made Curé of Charenton, where the Calvinists had their largest conventicle, for the express purpose of being a perpetual thorn in the side of these obnoxious sectaries; and his success, so far as confounding his opponents was concerned, was, even by their own confession, most signal and complete. Many conversions followed, but the evil was too deeply seated to be eradicated by ordinary means, as we shall hereafter see.

The proselytising efforts of the Calvinists had been (as already said) only too successful in the parish of St. Sulpice in drawing away many from the faith, and they laboured no less assiduously to deter their deluded victims from recanting their errors on their deathbeds. Cases of this latter kind were of such frequent occurrence that it became necessary to have recourse to the most determined measures in order to defeat the artifices and even violence employed by these heretics. For instance, a young man, who had been recovered to the Church, fell ill, and, intimidated by the opposition of his friends, refused to receive M. Olier's ministrations, when, on hearing of his condition, he hastened to visit him. Recommending him to the Mother of mercy, this good pastor ceased not to beg her intercession; and his prayer was heard. The sick man was seized with so vehement a desire to see a priest that, finding all his entreaties and expostulations useless, he protested that, weak as he was, he would drag himself to the window, and there, until his voice failed him, he would cry to the passers-by for assistance; nay, that, if necessary, he would precipitate himself into the street below rather than die without confession. This threat compelled his relatives to send for a priest, but thenceforward they refused him all aid in his sickness; and, had not M. Olier caused him to be removed to a place of safety, he could only have purchased the necessaries of life by renewed apostasy. No wonder, therefore, that on hearing that the Calvinist minister, Aubertin, who was dying, desired to make his abjuration, but was forcibly prevented by his relatives, M. Olier should call in the aid of the civil power to gain admission to his bedside. He went accordingly, accompanied by the Bailly of the Faubourg, as well as by a strong party of the parishioners, who had collected for the protection of their pastor. The report, however, proved to be unfounded, the unhappy man protesting with his last breath that he died in the

tenets he had ever professed. M. Olier at once withdrew, and having succeeded—not, however, without some difficulty—in persuading the people to disperse, went immediately to the church, and, throwing himself before the altar, gave free vent to the sorrow that filled his soul. We shall have no difficulty in conceiving the use that was made of this display of zeal by the sectaries, who accused the Curé of St. Sulpice of violating the terms of the edict of Nantes, which forbade that Protestants should be disturbed on their sick beds by the intrusive ministrations of the Catholic priesthood.

He was doomed to meet with a similar affliction in the case of one of his female parishioners who had seceded from the Church and, in spite of all his exhortations and the prayers of many devout souls, persisted in her errors to the last. To console him in his bitter grief, one of his priests suggested that, as he had employed every means in his power to effect her conversion, he had nothing wherewith to reproach himself. "Ah! my child," he said, "cease, cease to speak to me thus; you know not the value of a soul. It might glorify God eternally, and its loss is irreparable. The thought is frightful!" and he sought refuge, as was his wont, in prayer before the Tabernacle. This distressing circumstance seemed to add even greater vigilance to his zeal, and he neglected no means in order to discover if any of his flock frequented the meetings of the Huguenots, or evinced an inclination towards their errors, never failing to visit them in person or to depute one of his priests to visit them in his stead, and displaying towards them the utmost kindness and solicitude. Nor were these precautions the effect of an importunate zeal; they were necessitated by the secret and unscrupulous machinations of the sectaries, who were indefatigable in their endeavours to recruit their diminished numbers by the accession of every bad and ignorant Catholic whom they could persuade to make even a nominal profession of Protestantism. To such an excess, indeed, of fury were some of these fanatics carried that an instance is on record, supported by incontestable evidence, of a mother revenging herself on her daughter for going to Mass by burning the soles of her feet and, when this barbarous proceeding did not produce the desired effect, attempting first to stifle her in a bath and then to stab her with a knife. At length the poor girl fell dangerously ill, and seemed to be at the point of death, when, struck with remorse, the mother implored her child's forgiveness for

the cruelty with which she had treated her. Her daughter, however, in a spirit of charity truly admirable, replied, "O my mother, I deserved far worse in punishment of my sins; and may it not be that God allowed you to treat me thus in order to bring about your conversion? I pray that in His goodness He will perfect the work He has begun!" Unhappily, neither the generous conduct nor the earnest prayers of this truly Christian soul were to be rewarded by seeing her mother delivered from the toils in which she had become entangled. Of noble extraction but possessed of no private fortune, she was entirely dependent for subsistence on relatives who were members of the sect, and as she knew that they would disown her if she became a Catholic, her pride revolted against receiving aid from strangers or, like so many others, from her parish priest.

The charity of this good pastor was never weary of devising means both for rescuing his people from the snares of heresy and unbelief, and warning them against the fatal seductions of vice. As an antidote to the number of irreligious and immoral publications which were widely disseminated, M. Olier planted a book-stall close to the gates of the church, where, as it will be remembered, the vendors of charms and amulets and books of superstition and magic had been in the habit of plying their iniquitous trade. Every work exhibited for sale was previously examined to ascertain that it contained nothing contrary to faith or morals. It may also be mentioned here that, as a means of divine protection against relapse and a powerful safeguard against the dangers and temptations to which converts from heresy were peculiarly exposed, M. Olier attached great importance to their receiving without delay the holy sacrament of Confirmation; a matter to which he considered that sufficient attention had not hitherto been paid. In all things he was guided, not by the lights of his own judgment, but by simple reference to the directions and intentions of Holy Church, to whom alone, and not to any man, however great his gifts, Christ had given charge to teach, correct, and edify His people.

We have been witnesses of M. Olier's missionary zeal, his love of souls, his tenderness to sinners, his care of the poor, his labours, and his sacrifices, and all this in the service of those of whom he had not the personal charge; but now it is his own flock to which he is called to minister, and of which he must one day render an account to the Chief Shepherd. The profligacy, the obduracy, the ignorance, the worldliness, the indifference of the thousands by whom he was sur-

rounded filled his soul with a most poignant anguish, and he would have willingly sacrificed his life to rescue and save them. It was the one continual subject of his prayers as he knelt before the Tabernacle, pouring out his heart to God with sighs and tears and inward moanings, and in his discourses to the people it was his ever-recurring theme. Taking as his text one day those words of the Apostle: *Continuus dolor cordi meo*,* "It is the one abiding grief of my heart," he cried, "to behold the little esteem in which the only real and solid goods are held by men. Alas! the world is for ever chasing vain phantoms, striving to plunge deeper and deeper in vanity and lies, and no man thinks of his eternal salvation. *Non est qui recogitet in corde; non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum.*† See how the courts of princes and the anterooms of statesmen are crowded with greedy and ambitious applicants! Behold the multitudes that throng the marts of commerce and all the public places of this vast city! Why all this restless activity and excitement? To fulfil the desires of the flesh. I say it weeping, with St. Paul—*flens dico*—all these men who live only for their pleasures are the enemies of the Cross and of the Life of Jesus Christ, who condemns this accursed self-seeking, the end of which is the ruin and perdition of souls; they make their belly their God; they labour only for their everlasting destruction. O great Saint, who art the patron of this parish, thou didst not walk by these ways in the days of thy pilgrimage; thou who now reignest with God in the Holy Sion, be present with us; grant me something of the spirit with which thou wast so abundantly replenished; grant to me, great Saint, that I may draw the hearts of this people to an imitation of thy virtues, to a death unto sin and the love of holiness; assist me with thy spirit and thy zeal."

His only preparation for preaching was humble and fervent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; and when he spoke it was as uniting himself to Jesus Christ, the true light of man, and surrendering himself entirely to the impressions of His grace. On one only occasion, when he knew that the Queen Regent and other great personages were to be present, did he deviate from his usual practice, thinking to do more honour to the sacred ministry; but he experienced so much sterility and constraint in thought and feeling, and

* Rom. ix. 2.

† "There is none that considereth in the heart; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Jeremias xii. 11. Psalm xiii. 1, 3.

so much difficulty in expressing himself, that he never renewed the attempt; being assured that God would have him renounce his own intellectual lights and abandon himself without reserve to the movements of His Spirit.* As he preached, a beauty not his own seemed to pervade his features; his voice, naturally sweet and powerful, assumed a richer and more ravishing tone, and to his whole appearance there was added a nobility and a majesty that had something in it celestial and divine. The emotions kindled in his breast were at times so overpowering that he was fain to pause in his discourse; his voice would fail him, and he would be compelled to leave the pulpit. The effect on his audience was of a corresponding intensity; it was not rare to see men and women suddenly burst into tears and throw themselves on their knees, imploring the mercy of God; and after the sermon was ended, the confessionals would be surrounded with persons who, touched by the grace of contrition for their sins, desired to make their peace with God and lead the rest of their lives in His faith and fear.

Nor was this evangelical fervour confined to the interior of the church. One day, as he was passing through the streets, he came upon a crowd of people, who were amusing themselves with the immodest jests and antics of a merry-andrew. Fired with holy indignation at the shameless language that met his ear, and emulating the zeal of the Apostle when, as he walked the streets of Athens, he beheld the city wholly given to idolatry, he stopped at a few paces from the throng and, lifting up his voice, began to speak of the things of God and of eternity. At first only a few bystanders gathered round him, but curiosity even got the better of present amusement, and soon the whole laughter-loving crowd had left their saucy favourite and were hearkening with strange emotions to one who spoke to them of justice and chastity, and judgment to come. It was indeed a scene to excite men's wonder,—the influence exerted by an earnest and a fearless man over a giddy fickle crowd;

* A similar instance is recorded of St. Vincent Ferrer. "One day that he had to preach before a prince, he thought he must use more study and more human diligence in the preparation of his sermon. He applied himself thereto with extraordinary pains, but neither the prince nor the audience generally were as satisfied with this studied discourse as they were with that of the next day, which he composed in his ordinary way, according to the movement of the Spirit of God. His attention being called to the difference between the two sermons, "Yesterday," said he, "it was Brother Vincent who preached; to-day it was the Holy Spirit." *The Spiritual Doctrine of Father Louis Lallemant*, P. iv. C. iv. A. iii.

but to this succeeded a prodigy of grace: the poor buffoon, deserted by his audience, drew near in turn; he listened, and was converted.

Allusion has been made to the various guilds or confraternities of artisans and workmen, and the onerous yet often frivolous duties imposed by them on the clergy. These companies were recognized by the laws, and had their peculiar privileges and customs. Instituted originally with the laudable object of uniting in the bonds of fraternal amity, and by the common obligations of religion, members of the same trade or handicraft, whom motives of self-interest might naturally render jealous and distrustful of each other, they had degenerated into mere associations for merrymaking and carousing; in other words, intemperance and debauchery. The principal occasions on which they assembled were the festivals of their patron saints, particularly that of St. Martin, which ancient piety had set apart as times of special devotion, but which popular license had converted into days of Bacchanalian riot and profaned by a number of heathenish superstitions and extravagances. These abuses had become so consecrated by long, immemorial custom that the people indulged in the worst excesses, apparently, without shame or remorse; and the Protestants, with a disingenuousness examples of which are unhappily too prevalent in our own time and country, had the hardihood to declare, even from their pulpits, that such were the "devotions" authorized by the Church for the observance of these sacred times. All these abominations M. Olier now laboured to suppress. He called the different confraternities together, and instructed them in the proper modes of solemnizing these privileged days. His kindness, his sincerity, his genuine earnestness, produced a powerful effect on the rough but passionate natures of the men he addressed; and from many his appeal met at once with an effectual response. These he prepared for a general confession, and afterwards for communion. A large number of the brothers renounced their profane practices, and banished every emblem of their once cherished superstitions from their houses. To give the more authority to his acts, he obtained from the doctors of the Sorbonne a formal condemnation of the usages in question, which he caused to be printed, and copies of it distributed among the members of the companies. He directed the confessor of the Community to direct his especial attention to the brothers and their families; visiting them repeatedly, particularly at times of sickness and distress, reconciling differences, and exhorting them to the practice of all their Christian duties. These offices were

often discharged by himself in person; and there was scarcely an attic or a hovel—for the parish extended far into the country—to which his charity did not take him. The people soon learned to regard him, not as a prying servant of the governing powers, or one who presumed on his social position to intrude into their dwellings, but as an affectionate and anxious father, a true pastor of souls, whose only desire was to promote their welfare, temporal and eternal. So great was the influence he obtained over all sorts of men that even the public notaries entered into an agreement among themselves not to transact any legal business, except in cases of necessity, on Sundays and other holidays of the Church.

A zeal so ardent and untiring, animated as it was by a genuine spirit of self-sacrifice, could not fail to be productive of most salutary effects. This parish, lately so forsaken of God, had become—with the constant sermons and ever-recurring religious exercises, conducted by a large and devoted band of priests—the scene of what had all the appearance of a perpetual mission, and the result was a wonderful revival of piety and fervour among the people. So great, at length, became the number of penitents that the priests of the Community were occupied in hearing confessions on Sundays and festivals from five in the morning till one o'clock in the day, and again in the afternoon till late in the evening; and this at the time of the greater solemnities continued for several days together. The church was soon so densely crowded that it became necessary to concert measures for the construction of a more spacious building; but, as this would be a work of time and, in fact, was not completed for several years, all that could be accomplished for the present was to enlarge the approaches by demolishing several houses in the vicinity. Yet even then the multitudes that filled the precincts were so great that, during Lent, the carriage of the Queen Regent was detained for nearly ten minutes at the corner of the Rue de l'Aveugle* before it could be extricated from the throng.

* Now the Rue de St. Sulpice.

CHAPTER III.

M. OLIER'S REFORMS CONTINUED.

OF all the measures adopted by M. Olier for the reformation of his parish, that on which he most relied was an increased devotion to Jesus in the Sacrament of His Love and to His blessed Mother. "When God," he wrote, "would revive the piety of His people, it is not by preaching or by miracles—these are the means He uses for the first establishment of His Church—but by renewed devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. The design of the Son of God in coming upon earth was to communicate to men His divine life, in order to render them like unto Himself. This transformation He begins in Baptism and advances in Confirmation, but he brings it to perfection in the Holy Eucharist, that divine food which really communicates to us His own life and sentiments, gives us a participation in His adorable interior, and makes us one with Himself: *Qui manducat meam carnem, in me manet et ego in eo.** He has taken up His abode in the Blessed Sacrament that He may continue His mission even to the end of the world, and form in the remotest corners of the earth adorers of His Father, who may worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is there that He becomes the source of a divine life, the inexhaustible fountain, the boundless ocean, out of the fulness of which we are sanctified. By the Most Holy Sacrament He would fill priests with His Spirit and His grace, and convert souls by their means. My soul languishes and is faint by reason of the keen and vehement desire I have to see the Most Holy Sacrament revered by priests. The priest who is assiduous in honouring It, invoking It, and supplicating It for his people, will sooner or later obtain their conversion. It is impossible but that, being assiduous in prayer and remaining thus before the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, he must communicate in the sentiments, the

* "He that eateth My Flesh abideth in Me and I in him." St. John vi. 57.

fervour, and the efficacy of our Lord, so as to touch, enlighten, and convert the souls of His people. For the power of Jesus risen, who now dwelleth in the Church with a zeal all on fire for the glory of His Father, must produce these effects. Ah, Lord, if Thou wouldst multiply me so that I could be present wherever throughout the world the Sacred Host abides, that there I might live and die, there I might spend my days and my life, how happy I should be! I die of grief to see how little our Lord is honoured in the Blessed Sacrament either by priests or by people."

At the time he committed these thoughts to paper, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and the piety which nourishes itself with the Bread of Life seemed well-nigh to have died out in the parish of St. Sulpice. It was M. Olier's mission, not only to restore this devotion, but to surround it with a special majesty and glory. From the moment he took possession of his office, he had laboured to make both the church and its services less unworthy of Him to whose worship they were dedicated. This had long been the subject of M. Bourdoise's protests, as also of his prayers. "Scarcely anywhere," he had said—"nay, I will aver nowhere—in the whole kingdom will you find a church in which the divine service and all that appertains thereto, rubrics and ceremonies, vestments and ornaments, as well of the officials as of the altars, are ordered and observed as ecclesiastical rules and ordinances direct; at least, I have never seen or heard of such One of the most cherished desires of my heart is to see some house of God regulated, furnished, and served as the Church would have it to be; so that nothing should be done and nothing seen therein for which a reason cannot be given and the rule alleged. Such a church would serve as a model to others; a man's whole life would not be ill employed in so excellent a work."

The desire of this good priest was now to be fulfilled. M. Olier had not long entered on the duties of his charge before the church of St. Sulpice underwent a complete transformation. Where but a few weeks before everything testified to the state of ruin and desolation into which religion had fallen, the order and beauty which now prevailed struck beholders with astonishment. The altars were reconstructed and richly adorned, the pavement was repaired, the sacristy, lately so forlorn, was now duly furnished and decorated, while a second was set apart for the use of the priests who said the daily Masses. So scanty had become the vessels for the altar that, when M. Olier first came to St. Sulpice, the church possessed only

three chalices for the service of that large parish; but he never rested until out of his own resources, or through the bounty of his wealthier parishioners, he had procured an ample supply of altar-plate; so that in a few years no church in the whole metropolis was more richly provided with all that was necessary for the worthy celebration of the Holy Mysteries. Instead of the bells which had been suspended over the entrance to each chapel, and which rang at irregular intervals, as the celebrant happened to be ready, a single bell was placed at the sacristy door; and every day, at every quarter of an hour, from six o'clock in the morning till twelve at noon, that bell gave warning to the faithful that a priest was proceeding to offer the Adorable Sacrifice. For the future the sacristan and the parish clerk * were both to be ecclesiastics, and no priest was to appear in the church unless vested in surplice or long gown. The singers, however, who had not received the tonsure, were prohibited from wearing the surplice. No laics, on any pretext whatever, were admitted into the sanctuary or choir, with the exception of the princes or princesses of the blood royal, when they were present in state at any extraordinary solemnity. Two doorkeepers were appointed, whose business it was to disperse the crowd of beggars who gathered round the entrance, to the annoyance of the congregation, many of whom, to avoid their importunity, had been driven to frequent the chapels of the different Communities in the suburbs. No one employed in the sacristy was allowed to solicit presents at baptisms. The organist, who in the choice of his pieces had paid no regard to times and seasons, was provided with a book of regulations in accordance with the Roman practice, as then in use. The ringers also received a set of instructions; the sexton, who hitherto had been left to his own devices, was subjected to supervision and control; nor did M. Olier disdain to see to the ordering of the parish clock, on which depended the punctual performance of all the offices of the church. Need it be added that an end had been put to the tavern in the vaults, where, as M. de Bassancourt with affected gravity informs M. Bourdoise, "our communicants used to go to take a little draught, and eat a bit of blessed bread, in the excess of their devotion!"

* Littré in his *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* has this explanation: "Dans les paroisses Clerc de l'œuvre, celui qui a soin de certaines choses concernant l'œuvre de la paroisse." As there were then no civil registers, this official may have been employed in giving certificates, entering parochial accounts, &c.

One sublime and beautiful thought M. Olier had cherished which it was now his delight to see realized. It was that, while the greater part of the priests of his community were dispersed about the parish, engaged in labouring for the salvation of souls, the rest should be assembled in the choir of the church, offering to God, in the name of clergy and people, the sacrifice of homage and praise. This was M. Olier's great idea, and he expressed it at length in some considerations which he drew up for the benefit of his ecclesiastics.* He would have them bear in mind that "in reciting the Divine Office they were acting in the name of the Church, or rather in that of Jesus Christ Himself, who was pleased to make use of their mouths and hearts as so many instruments wherewith to give praise to the Majesty of His Father by His Spirit dwelling in them." Henceforth, therefore, the Canonical Hours were publicly recited by the priests of St. Sulpice, an endowment being provided by M. Olier for their perpetual observance; in all which his exertions were powerfully seconded by the zeal and piety of M. de Bassancourt, who for the first seven years after the establishment of the Community was Master of Ceremonies at the Seminary.

Such was the state of religious apathy into which the population of this unhappy parish had settled down, that scarcely any one assisted at Mass except on Sundays and days of obligation. Pierced to the heart by such woeful insensibility, M. Olier strove both by public instructions and by private admonitions to rekindle the light of faith among his people, showing them the immense graces which are attached to an assiduous attendance at the Holy Sacrifice and pressing on them the obligation, as parishioners, of repairing the dishonour which had been done to God by so general a neglect of that supreme act of divine worship. Nor was it only to those who had their time at their free disposal that he addressed himself, he was no less urgent with the artisans and tradesmen of the parish; assuring them that, as a diligent attendance at Mass need not interfere with the due management of their affairs, so neither would it be found to be detrimental to their temporal interests. In order to give them every facility for fulfilling this duty without serious inconvenience—although it might entail some sacrifice of personal ease—he caused Masses to be said at suitable hours in the morning; indeed, we have already seen that special instructions were provided for workmen at the early hour of four o'clock in summer.

* An extract from these considerations is appended to this Chapter.

If attendance at Mass was thus unfrequent, we shall not need to be told that communions were more unfrequent still; and, in fact, few persons communicated, and that but seldom; while the very idea of visiting Jesus present on the altar was, to all appearance, lost among the people. From the moment M. Olier assumed the charge of the parish he made this pious practice the subject of his continual exhortations; but he did more: he enforced his teaching by example. He was constantly to be seen upon his knees before the Tabernacle; he never left the Presbytery without first paying a visit of adoration, and he did the same when he returned; it was observed, also, that he chose by preference those streets in which there were churches, and where, therefore, he could perform a passing act of homage. His ecclesiastics were so emulous of his piety that from morning till night there was no lack of worshippers; he would have them resort to this devotion as a relief and recreation in their toils, and their one habitual occupation in old age: here they were to find their peace and repose in their declining years.*

Further, this great priest of God established a Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, which included at first only such of the ladies of the Faubourg as by their high position and known piety were likely to exercise a beneficial influence on others of their sex. This was the rule he adopted generally—to engage in the first instance the women and the children, and then, through their means, to gain access to the men. The associates met together every Thursday in the parish church, when M. Olier delivered an exhortation on the subject of the devotion; their visits for adoration were made in the afternoon, on such days and at such hours as each might choose; and they took part, with lighted torches, in all processions held in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. His addresses at the commencement were couched in language suited to the more cultivated intelligences of his auditors, but soon it was given him to see that the devotion ought to be general and the blessings of the Confraternity extended to persons of every class; he modified his style accordingly, and, though his instructions were no less elevated in their subject-matter, he knew how to adapt them to the poorest and

* It was probably for the sake of edification to the parishioners that M. Olier never sought permission to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the chapel of the Seminary. The Community began to enjoy this privilege in the year 1698, but the custom of visiting the parish church still continued to be observed by its members.

most illiterate members of his flock. It was on the third Sunday in June, 1643, that he invited all the parishioners, without exception, to join the Confraternity. Hitherto (as he said) it had been limited to such as had leisure for visiting the church on certain fixed days and at certain fixed hours, but for the future there would be no such restriction, and they whose avocations prevented them from paying their devotion on weekdays might do so on Sundays and festivals; and that, too, without foregoing their usual recreations, so only they were such as good Christians might innocently enjoy. Indeed, as he took care to tell them, their recreations were likely to be all the more innocent and none the less pleasurable when they carried with them through the day the blessing of Him whom they had just adored, and by their piety had earned for themselves and their families the special favour and protection of their angel-guardians. This invitation was cordially responded to by the parishioners, and by none more so than by those who may be called the busy classes, many of whom were remarkable for their punctuality and their fervour. Thus it came about that what in its beginnings was an exceptional observance became a general practice, and ladies of the highest rank might be seen walking in procession, or kneeling side by side in adoration, with the meanest of the people. This adoration, which at first was observed only in the afternoon, was shortly after commenced in the early part of the day, and at last was continued through the night, and so (as we shall hereafter see) became perpetual.

Having remarked that some of the greater people had been remiss in their attendance during the week, he rebuked them at one of the Thursday meetings for their negligence, showing how unbecoming it was to leave their Sovereign Lord without worshippers at such times as He was pleased to invite them to His presence. Upon which the Princesse de Condé, who had been absent on a late occasion, desirous of repairing any scandal she might have given by her apparent indevotion, stood up, and said with a touching simplicity, "I was absent, Sir, on Saturday, having gone to pay my court to the Queen." M. Olier, who had no regard to rank or birth where duty was concerned, replied, "You would have done better, Madam, had you come here to pay your court to the King of kings." The Princess, however, had a legitimate excuse. Louis XIII. was just dead, and the Queen, who, during the first forty days of public mourning, was obliged by court etiquette to remain in her own apart-

ments, with flambeaux burning, had begged her to come and take her out privately for an airing. On being made aware of the circumstance, M. Olier felt that some reparation was due for the public rebuke he had administered, and, making her very presence there the occasion of a commendation, he bade his hearers take pattern by the piety and humility of one of her exalted station, who came in the crowd like any ordinary person, and sat with the rest on her little straw-chair. This princess, who was under M. Olier's spiritual direction, did much, both by example and direct influence, for the promotion of piety among the ladies of the parish, and especially in this matter of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

One of M. Olier's first acts on coming to St. Sulpice had been to establish a solemn Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament, with a procession and exposition, on the first Sundays and Thursdays in each month. This most beautiful devotion was at that time of much rarer observance in France than it subsequently became; and it was objected by many persons of piety—M. Bourdoise among the number—that a more frequent celebration would so familiarize people's minds with the tremendous mystery as to lead to irreverence and desecration. But M. Olier contended,—and the authoritative sanction of the Church, as well as the general experience of the faithful, has confirmed his judgment,—that the dispensations of grace vary in such matters with the needs of the age; and that, as in these latter days the blasphemy of heresy has especially assailed the August Sacrament of the Altar, so it was the will of God that reparation should be made by a more open, more frequent, and (so to say) more triumphant display of homage and adoration; moreover, that the elevation of the sacerdotal order was inseparably associated with this increased devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, of which priests were the consecrated ministers and guardians. He was careful, however, to provide against the apprehended evil consequences by surrounding the celebration with every circumstance that could tend to exalt it in the eyes of the people.* On every first Thursday in the month there was solemn High Mass, with a procession; and the Exposition was announced by three peals of bells. It was ordered

* As a proof of the care he took in this matter, it is mentioned that, when a person of some consideration in the parish offered to found a solemn Mass of the Blessed Sacrament, with Benediction, to be celebrated every Thursday throughout the year, he refused his consent, for fear of diminishing rather than stimulating the devotion of the people.

also that there should never be less than thirty-eight ecclesiastics present, four of whom should bear the canopy, four be vested in copes or dalmatics, while the rest should carry lighted torches in their hands; two thurifers, moreover, preceding, who were to incense continually as the procession advanced.

For the perpetual observance of this edifying practice, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon established a special endowment; and a similar fund was contributed by a pious family in the parish for the solemnization of the Forty Hours' Adoration, which M. Olier had inaugurated, during the three days immediately preceding the penitential season of Lent. He also instituted an annual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the feast of Epiphany and on that of St. Martin, both in reparation and as a corrective of the disorders which prevailed at that particular time. Unable, by reason of his unceasing pastoral labours, to satisfy the ardour of his devotion, he kept two tapers continually burning on the altar to represent his own consuming love, and provided at his personal expense the torches which were borne before the Blessed Sacrament when carried to the sick. Such zeal for God and for His honour and worship could not fail to be contagious. Accordingly, the days which had been devoted to riot or mere amusement, began to be observed religiously; the people came more frequently to the holy offices, and endeavoured by their piety and fervour to make reparation for their former profanities.

Communions at St. Sulpice (as has been said) had become both few and rare; a circumstance attributable, not only to the tepidity and indifference which is sure to follow where pastors are themselves wanting in zeal and devotion, but to that insidious and most detestable heresy which was now fast gaining ground in France, and which, under the pretence of aspiring after a higher spirituality and doing greater honour to the Sacrament of the Altar, prevented thirsting, perishing souls from approaching the fount of life and sanctity. Jansenism was doing its utmost, by exaggerating the qualifications required for a right reception of the Holy Eucharist, to make unfrequent communion a mark of piety, as it was the badge of its own pernicious sect. Against this odious hypocrisy the teaching of M. Olier and his community was one continued protest. Equally free, on the one hand, from a severe rigorism and, on the other, from a too indulgent laxity, he sought to inspire his people with a reverent but ardent devotion to Jesus in His Sacrament of Love, and to

instruct them in the necessary dispositions for worthily partaking of the Bread of Angels. To accomplish this in the most solid and effectual manner, he instructed his catechists to bestow the greatest care in preparing children and young persons for their first communion; and, to train them from their earliest years in the practice of frequently approaching this heavenly banquet, he established a monthly general communion, which was the source of incalculable blessings to his flock.

With this most salutary of all devotions was conjoined that which is its offspring and its complement, a most tender and confiding love of Mary, whose power and prerogatives were also covertly assailed, if not openly decried, by the Jansenistic party. On entering the parish he had solemnly placed it under the patronage and protection of the Blessed Virgin, and in all public processions her banner was displayed together with that of St. Sulpice. It was his desire that on the first Saturday of each month the younger members of his flock should renew their consecration to their holy Mother; and to this end he established a Mass and procession, at which all the children in the schools assisted. But it was on the day of their first communion that he who had ever loved to bestow that which was best and dearest on his heavenly Patroness rejoiced in making her the offering of hearts, then most worthy of her favour; hearts which her Divine Son had just deigned personally to visit and had replenished with the Spirit of His grace.

A fragment of one of his addresses on these occasions has been preserved, and is worthy of being cited as illustrating the vivid manner with which he impressed the truths of religion on the tender hearts of the young:—"My children, I address to you this day the same words which Jesus spoke when He was on earth: '*Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.*' * Yes, this is the day on which you are to enter this Heavenly Kingdom. What a day of glory and of benediction! This day, without quitting your body, without causing grief and mourning to your parents or your relatives, you are to enter into Paradise. You know that when children die after holy baptism they go straight to Heaven; and that the Church, instead of weeping and mourning for them, celebrates their festival, because, not having lost the white robe of innocence, they pass at once from this world into the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, this it is, my children, which our Lord desires to do this day:

* St. Matthew xix. 14. St. Mark x. 14. St. Luke xviii. 16.

to admit you into His Kingdom, because He finds you clothed with the garment of innocence. This day is a day of triumph to you, it is a day of immortality, it is a day of royalty, a day of sanctity. See, my children, whether you be in a state to enjoy this blessing and this grace divine. Remember that nothing defiled can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore it was that before the gate of the earthly Paradise, which is a figure of Heaven, an angel held a flaming sword to prevent all sinners from entering therein;* and Jesus Christ, in the Temple of Jerusalem, which was a foreshadowing of Paradise, taking a scourge into His hand, drove out of that holy house all those who were given to covetousness and whose hearts were attached to the goods of this world:† an evident sign of the awful vengeance which He executes on those who are so presumptuous as to attempt to enter into His Kingdom while in a state of sin. Yet, strange to say, in the Gospel‡ we meet with one who dared to enter the guest-chamber without having on a wedding garment, whereupon the master of the house, incensed at such audacity and presumption, commanded him to be seized, bound hand and foot, and cast out into the darkness. This is a figure of those who dare to approach the Holy Communion in a state of mortal sin. Wherefore it is that the Greek Church bids her deacons cry aloud before Holy Communion, 'If any one hath aught against his brother, let him go first and be reconciled;'§ and why in the Latin Church the kiss of peace is given in token of fraternal charity. My children, what the Church does will be done also on the day when God shall admit His elect into His Kingdom, to make them sit down at the eternal banquet which He has prepared for them: the great herald of God will then cry aloud and say, 'Begone, ye who are given to anger or immodesty; ye who are covetous or deceitful and love lying.' And it is in these same words that I address myself to you: Purify your hearts, and so come to this divine banquet. It was instituted to give new life to your souls, but it profiteth only those who are already alive and who have in them the beginning of the life of Jesus Christ."

In the Seminary of St. Sulpice is a picture representing M. Olier kneeling before an altar with a youth of noble aspect, whom he is consecrating to the holy Mother of God. This was Anne-Auger Granry, page of the chamber to the Duke of Orleans. He made his first communion when he was twelve years old, and having through

* Gen. iii. 24.
† St. John ii. 15.
‡ St. Matthew xxii. 11–13.
§ Ib. ver. 23, 24.

divine grace preserved his innocence unstained, he came in his fifteenth year to make a retreat at the Seminary. Surrounded by all the temptations of the court and now arrived at a most critical period of his life, the one desire of his heart was that he might sooner die than live to offend God by one mortal sin; and scarcely had he entered on his retreat when he was taken ill, and in a very few days expired. M. de Bretonvilliers, who acted as his confessor during his retreat, was so assured of his being in a state of bliss that he would have contented himself with saying a few Masses for him; but, on M. Olier declaring that the youth still needed his prayers, he had numerous Masses offered in his behalf, until the holy pastor learned by divine revelation that the justice of God was satisfied. "This morning," he said, "when offering the Adorable Sacrifice, I beheld his soul, resplendent with light, ascending into Heaven."

Next to Jesus really present on the altars of the Church the servant of God loved the poor, who are His images and representatives. When engaged in giving missions, his first visit on arriving at any town was to the Blessed Sacrament, his second to the hospital or the asylum of the poor. He had bound himself by vow to be their servant to the end of his days, and faithfully did he perform it when he became pastor of St. Sulpice. Crowds of miserable objects, the fetid odour from whose garments tainted the very air, might be seen surrounding the doors of the Presbytery, where they ever met with a ready, cordial welcome. Not content with receiving them with a sweet and gentle kindness, he invited them to come to him, he went out to seek them, he gathered them about him, and distributed alms among them according to their several needs. The bashful poor were specially the objects of his solicitude, and of these the first list presented to him contained no less than fifteen hundred names. To inquire into the circumstances and relieve the necessities of all who claimed his bounty, he needed an assistant of peculiar talents and experience; and such a one was provided him in the person of Jean Blondeau, better known in his own day as Brother John of the Cross. He had himself belonged to the tribe of beggars until he was taken into the service of Père Bernard, and the way he obtained the name by which he was popularly known is too characteristic to be omitted. Great as was their mutual respect, servant and master seem to have been a severe trial to each other; their dispositions and humours were always clashing; and so troublesome and vexatious did the "Poor Priest" find his adopted beggar that he reckoned him

among the extraordinary *crosses* which God was pleased to lay upon him. But Brother John had his grievances too, the principal item of which was singular enough. "When I am serving his Mass," said he, "he remains rapt in an ecstacy three hours together; and all the time I am wanted elsewhere, for he has nobody but me to wait upon him. When I have prepared his meal, and go to tell him it is ready, I find him in an ecstacy again, and I have no means of getting him out of it. It is perfectly unendurable!" P. Bernard, however, retained him in his service as long as he lived; and when he was gone, the good brother, who had a real veneration for the virtues of his master, never ceased reproaching himself for all the trouble he had given him. "He has turned out a great saint," he would say, with tears in his eyes; "and what fills me with confusion is that, instead of imitating his example, I contributed to his sanctification by all I made him suffer."

Accompanied by Brother John, M. Olier visited in person all the poor of his vast parish, listening patiently to their complaints and relieving their necessities. For the sick he provided nurses and medical attendants; for the orphans a home; for distressed females employment; and he charged certain of the parishioners in whom he could confide to watch over their conduct and supply their wants out of funds which he placed at their disposal. On two days in the week he gave food and clothing to crowds of beggars, who sometimes numbered as many as nine hundred; and, with an indulgent charity, which resembled that of St. Thomas of Villanova, he refrained from enquiring too narrowly into their tale of woe or taking note of any artifice they might employ to excite his pity, choosing rather, in the spirit of the Apostle's counsel to the Corinthians,* to suffer himself to be defrauded than to deal hardly with the poor of Christ, and availing himself of the occasion to touch their hearts with a word of counsel and recall them to the paths of honesty and virtue. No wonder that with such a constant drain upon them his resources were often quite exhausted. One friend, however, he had who never failed him in his straits, and who, he used to declare, would never be wanting to those who loved and cared for the poor, the Blessed Virgin. To the bags which were hung up in the Presbytery to receive alms for their relief he had attached an image of this compassionate Mother; and, although they were always being emptied, they were as continually refilled when the moment of need

* 1 Cor. vii. 7.

arrived. "She it is," he would say to his priests, pointing to the image, "on whom I rely to take care of the poor; I leave the whole management to her; I tell her my wants, and she in her goodness provides for them."

One of his first acts was to re-organize the Confraternity of Charity, which had been established at St. Sulpice ten years before by St. Vincent de Paul, but had become almost extinct. The association was composed of the ladies of the parish, many of them high in rank, who met every week at the Presbytery after hearing Mass. Some contributed a fixed sum every month; others provided victuals; others again visited the sick at their own homes. Among these devoted women one of the most remarkable was Mme. Leschassier, of the illustrious family of Miron, who, though delicately and even luxuriously brought up, was in the daily practice of making the beds of the poor creatures and washing and mending their linen with her own hands. One day that her daughter, whose humility and charity were worthy of such a mother, saw her preparing to comb the head of a little girl which was more than usually dirty and revolting, she drew the child towards her that she might perform the office instead. But Mme. Leschassier, perceiving her object, said, "No, my dear; that is not fair; you must not take the best to yourself." Acting under M. Olier's direction, this young lady refused several advantageous offers of marriage, and devoted her whole life to works of charity.

It was found, however, that the aid thus rendered was uncertain and precarious at the best, particularly as many of the ladies, unable to give the constant and regular attention which was needed, were in the habit of hiring young women, or sending their servants, to supply their place. M. Olier, therefore, called in the aid of the Sisters of Charity, lately founded by Mlle. Le Gras (Louise de Marillac) * under the direction of St. Vincent de Paul; indeed, he was the first Curé of Paris who introduced them into his parish. He established them in the Rue du Pot-de-Fer, and employed them in taking care of children and attending to the sick, for whom they provided both food and medicine. But it was to his own ecclesiastics that he principally looked to minister to the necessities of the suffer-

* Mlle. Le Gras was the widow of Antoine Le Gras, Secretary to the Queen Marie de Médicis; but, as her husband's family did not, like her own, rank among the *noblesse*, she was not entitled, according to the usage of the time, to be styled Madame. This heroine of charity died March 15th, 1660, aged 68.

ing poor, to whom, as the dearest and most cherished members of the body of Christ, he would have them consider nothing less than a father's care was due. To obviate, however, any evils that might arise from mixing up together the temporal and the spiritual, no confessor was allowed to give alms to his penitents. If the poor, when they entered the tribunal of penance, began to complain of their bodily wants and sufferings, the priest was instructed to say, "Do you wish to confess your sins, or to receive alms? If I hear your confession, I cannot give you anything."

But, deeply pained as was the heart of this good pastor by the poverty and distress of so many of his flock, there was one woeful misery which caused it a far more bitter pang. The parish abounded in houses of infamy, to the ruin of the peace and happiness of families and the eternal destruction of innumerable souls. To cope with this monstrous evil, there needed the zeal and the courage and, we may add, the charity of an Apostle; and none of the three were wanting in the Curé of St. Sulpice. Again and again he urged upon his parishioners the strict obligation under which they lay not to receive as their tenants persons of notoriously profligate lives; and when this did not suffice, he denounced the vengeance of Heaven on all who knowingly lent themselves to this iniquity, enforcing his threats by the most terrible examples. He proceeded in person to demand the assistance of the magistrates, boldly declaring that, as the guardians of the public morals, they would have to answer at the judgment-seat of God for the disorders which, through pusillanimity or supineness, they failed to suppress. A number of abandoned women having established themselves in one of the most frequented streets near the church, where their shameless conduct was a scandal to the whole neighbourhood, he inveighed from the pulpit with so much vehemence against the toleration of the foul enormity that the Bailly of the Faubourg, using the authority he possessed, expelled the offenders from the parish, and even changed the appellation of the street, with the hope of obliterating the very memory of the disgrace which attached to the locality. This act the magistrate followed up by enforcing the severest punishment allowed by the law, which was that of imprisonment for fifteen days on bread and water, and adopting other vigorous measures. But M. Olier, meanwhile, was labouring to turn the vengeance of the law to the spiritual profit of its unhappy victims. He strove to provide them on their release with the means of obtaining an honest livelihood; he sent

some of the most virtuous among his parishioners to visit them in prison, and endeavour by kindness and sympathy to rescue them from the gulf of misery into which they had fallen; and, when any showed signs of penitence and a desire to return to a better life, he engaged charitable persons to provide them an asylum, at his personal expense, where they could be duly instructed and reconciled to God. Uniting himself interiorly to the sentiments of our Blessed Lord when He conversed with the woman of Samaria, he would himself undertake their reformation, blending in such measure as an enlightened prudence suggested, or, rather, as the Spirit of God dictated to him at the time, severity with sweetness, and not unfrequently by a word or two of calm persuasion allaying the fiercest bursts of passion or subduing the most obstinate temper.

On its being observed to him one day by a person of piety that all the trouble he took was simply thrown away, for that every day's experience showed that those on whom so much zeal was expended, on returning to the world, betook themselves again to a life of sin, he answered, "No; the labour we undergo for God is never lost. True it is that our efforts do not always meet with success, but success is not altogether the end we have in view; there is another on which we may infallibly reckon; and that is our own spiritual advancement, an increase of personal merit, greater glory in Heaven, and the highest honour to which a creature can aspire on earth, that of working for God. Besides, have *all* fallen who appeared to be reclaimed?" and, on receiving an admission to the contrary, he added, "Then you ought to rest content. If your life served only to save one single soul, could it be better employed, seeing that the Son of God would have given His own life to save that soul, had it been the only one in the whole world?" The better, however, to secure the fruits of his labours, he entrusted his penitents to the care of the community which bore the well-known name of the *Madeleine*, and, with the aid of some of the wealthiest inhabitants, would have founded a similar institution in his own parish; but the project encountered so determined an opposition on the part of other influential persons, who represented that such a foundation would be prejudicial to the establishments already in existence, that he was compelled to desist. In this, therefore, he had only the merit of the desire, without succeeding in his enterprise, and at the same time gave occasion to admire his exemplary patience and conformity to the will of God. When told that he must abandon his charitable design, he replied, "Ah, well,

blessed be God! He is master; His holy will be done in all things." *

After seven years of incessant toil he had the consolation of seeing his parish almost entirely delivered from that open exhibition of profligacy which had been its foulest blot, but it was not without great mental suffering and much self-inflicted penance. The sins and disorders of his people filled his heart with an abiding sorrow, and embittered every moment of his life. "I cannot understand," he would say, "how it is possible to love God and not to grieve over the loss of souls." Often he would shut himself up in the church, and there pass the whole night in prayer behind the High Altar,† imploring the Divine mercy for his flock; or he would lie prostrate on the floor of his chamber, giving vent to the anguish of his soul in audible sighs and groans; or, again, he would rise from his bed after two or three hours' sleep, and remain in prayer till morning. To this perseverance in supplication he added the severest bodily austerities, wearing constantly, despite all the labours of each day, an iron girdle with cruelly sharp points, and punishing his flesh with disciplines so mercilessly that the room in which he scourged himself would be found sprinkled with his blood. A charity so supernatural and heroic drew down extraordinary blessings on his people, and obtained the gift of repentance even for many inveterate sinners. One remarkable instance is related of his hearing for the first time of a certain notorious evil-liver, and saying Mass for his conversion; when, on the very same day, the man, suddenly seized with compunction, went to M. Olier, made his peace with God, and led ever after a good and exemplary life. Such, too, was the grace that accompanied his ministrations that, as we learn on the authority of M. de Bretonvilliers, of all the persons who were under his direction, or for whose conversion he had laboured, there were only two who died without giving signs of true contrition. The first was the Calvinist mentioned in a preceding chapter; the second was a girl twenty-two years of age, of abandoned life, who, struck down by a mortal illness, was brought in a few days to the brink of the grave. In spite of all his endeavours, his prayers, and his penances, and the prayers and exhortations of the priests

* In 1684, M. de la Barmondière, a disciple of M. Olier and one of his successors as Curé of St. Sulpice, was able to carry out this beneficent design by establishing in the parish a community of the Nuns of the Good Shepherd.

† The Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the Lady Chapel as well as on the High Altar at St. Sulpice.

whom he called to his aid, she persisted in her obduracy, and died like one possessed by the devil, howling and blaspheming; her last act—horrible to relate—being to spit on the crucifix which was held to her lips! So awful an event produced a great sensation in the parish, and the wretched creature was buried in unconsecrated ground, deprived in her death of all the rites of the Church which in the closing moments of her life she had rejected and profaned. The loss of this soul seemed to strike the holy pastor with a sort of consternation; and, for long after, his countenance and whole appearance gave tokens of the anguish that rent his heart.

The zeal of this great servant of God was no less conspicuously displayed in his unwearied efforts to preserve young and innocent girls from the arts of the seducer. If he became aware that there were any in danger of falling into sin, through the poverty or ill conduct of their parents or their own inexperience and indiscretion, he never rested until he had procured them the means of subsistence or had rescued them from their perilous position. And here he found a powerful coadjutor in the celebrated Mme. de Pollalion, (Marie de Lumague),* whose life was devoted to this and similar works of mercy. The numbers who are said to have been saved from destruction by their united exertions sufficiently prove the frightful prevalence of the evil against which they had to contend. Not content with interposing where his assistance was asked, M. Olier was indefatigable in detecting and defeating the machinations of the profligate and vicious. Learning one day that a miserable woman had agreed for a sum of money to deliver up her step-daughter to a wealthy libertine, and that the iniquitous bargain was to be concluded at a certain house which had been indicated to him, he obtained privately the protection of a guard, which he stationed at a convenient spot; then, going in company of Mme. de Pollalion to the house, he boldly confronted the infamous woman

* Sometimes called Mlle. Pollalion, because, like Mlle. Le Gras, her husband was a simple *écuyer;* no one below the wife of a *baron* or a *chevalier* being entitled to be addressed as Madame. She was remarkable for her ardent and energetic character. Among other acts which testified to her defiance of human respect, it is related of her that she made the pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame des Vertus barefoot in winter. Left a widow at the age of twenty-six, she quitted the Court and devoted her life to charitable works. In concert with M. Le Vachet, a priest of St. Sulpice, she took an active part in establishing an institute for the training of school-teachers, who were called the Sisters of Christian Union; and subsequently, under the guidance of St. Vincent de Paul, she became the foundress of the Sisters of Providence, who employed themselves in the education of the poor.

and her accomplice, and exposed their nefarious design in the presence of the intended victim, who, thus apprized of the plot contrived for her ruin, threw herself into the arms of Mme. de Pollalion and begged to be conveyed to a place of safety. But when a soul's salvation was at stake M. Olier was reckless of danger, and would brave any insult or outrage to effect his charitable object. He was in his chamber one winter's evening when, hearing a tumult outside, and being told that it was occasioned by a party of soldiers who were carrying off a young girl, in an instant, without consulting his own safety, he rushed into the street and pursued the ravishers, who, astounded at the courage and resolution of one unarmed man, gave up their prey into his hands. On another occasion he followed a gang of ruffians as far as Montrouge for a similar purpose and with similar success. His wish was to establish a house of refuge, under the care of a religious community, where young females whose chastity was imperilled might receive the protection they needed, and be brought up in habits of piety and virtue. Failing health, however, prevented the execution of this among many other charitable plans which he had devised but was unable to carry into effect.

Finding that many were living as man and wife in the parish who had never been married, or whose marriages had not been validly solemnized, he employed the necessary measures for supplying whatever was defective, taking care, however, not to publish to the world the shame that had attached to their position or the nullity of the previous contract. To prevent as far as possible similar abuses for the future, he drew up a paper of instructions, which he caused to be distributed among the people, and required that persons, before entering into the marriage state, should evince a sufficient knowledge of the principal articles of the faith and approach the holy sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. From this obligation none were exempted, whatever their rank or station in life. The mother attended with her daughter, the intended bridegroom came alone; and M. du Ferrier says of himself that, finding that one of his penitents who was among the first lords about Court did not know his catechism, he directed him to learn it, and the young nobleman repeated his lesson with all the humility of a child. M. Olier solemnly admonished all fathers and mothers of families, as they would answer before God for their children's souls, to keep strict watch over their morals, himself suggesting the precautions to be taken against contamination, and assisting the poor to observe them.

It was in the midst of these pastoral labours that he was called to decide upon an affair of no small importance. The Queen Regent, who had vowed to raise a magnificent temple to God if He should vouchsafe to grant an heir to the throne of France, was desirous of completing the construction of the Abbey of Val de Grâce, the first stone of which had been laid, in the April of 1645, by Louis XIV., then a child. Holding M. Olier in the highest esteem, this pious princess wished to place him at the head of the new establishment, and to this end proposed that he should exchange the parish of St. Sulpice for that of St. Jacques du Haut Pas,* in which the abbey was situated. M. Olier would have been disposed to entertain the question but for the assurance of Marie Rousseau that such a change would lead to the ruin of the Seminary. The Queen would then have had him nominate one of his ecclesiastics, in which her efforts were seconded by those of the Curé of St. Jacques, M. Pons de Lagrange. But even to this proposal M. Olier could not bring himself to accede, fearing to get embroiled with the Oratorian Fathers, whose house of St. Magloire was in the close vicinity of the abbey, and with whose views on the now all-engrossing subject of grace he was little in accord. For the same reason he subsequently declined to undertake the superintendence of the Filles Pénitentes of St. Magloire, lately reformed.

The great reputation which M. Olier now enjoyed, the order which reigned in his parish, and the general edification afforded by his community, brought him into close relations with all who, in his day, were remarkable for their piety and virtues. It was about the year 1644 that he contracted an intimate and lasting friendship with M. Crétenet, who, though a surgeon by profession and a married man, exercised an extraordinary influence in re-animating the devotion of the clergy, and became the founder of the Missionaries of St. Joseph. Such was the respect which M. Olier entertained for this good layman, who paid frequent visits to the Presbytery, that he bade his ecclesiastics take him as their model. But a still more notable personage, and one whose name will always remain associated with that of M. Olier and the Community of St. Sulpice, was the Père Yvan, founder of the Nuns of Notre Dame de la Miséricorde, whose acquaintance he made in the same year. Burning

* Or Maupas, being an abbrevation of *mauvais pas*, so called from a religious community which was founded in the 12th century for receiving travellers and assisting them gratuitously in crossing rivers, &c.

with zeal for the conversion of sinners and gifted with extraordinary lights in the direction of souls, this celebrated man, now considerably advanced in years, led a life of severe austerity, which seemed to affect his whole manner and conversation. There was a certain roughness in his exterior and plainness in his speech which to men of the world must have borne the appearance of insufferable rudeness. He had a way of testing people's merits by taking them to task for some fault which he thought, or affected to think, he had observed in their conduct, and he subjected M. Olier to this ordeal the first time he saw him. Joining the Community in the refectory, where the servant of God was taking his simple repast with the rest, P. Yvan kept his eyes fixed upon him, and, after observing him awhile, he said, as with an air of disappointment and disgust, "I am astonished at your want of self-denial; you eat your dinner with all the avidity of a glutton;" and he continued for some time in the same strain with the utmost freedom, adding whatever he thought most likely to irritate and provoke. M. Olier listened with all placidity and patience, and, when the old man had said his worst, he thanked him unaffectedly for the charity which had led him to rebuke him so frankly for his faults, and promised, with God's help, to profit by his advice; "for, father," said he, "it is seldom one meets with friends who do not flatter, but speak the truth in love." While he was uttering these words P. Yvan watched him narrowly, to judge by his features whether his speech expressed the genuine emotions of his heart; then, no longer withholding his admiration, he enthusiastically declared that M. Olier, while taking his ordinary repast, practised a mortification as real as the austerest anchorite; and such was the opinion which from that moment he entertained of his sanctity that he was wont to say, "M. Olier is truly a saint: he is dead; nature is extinct in him." M. Olier, on his part, appreciated no less highly the virtues of his eccentric friend, and begged him to aid him by his counsels and co-operation in the establishment of the Seminary. P. Yvan had come to Paris to claim some property which had been bequeathed to his institute, but, seeing that a lawsuit was inevitable, he relinquished his rights and, having thus effectually rid himself of worldly distractions, devoted all his energies to the seminary and parish of St. Sulpice. He was invited to speak at all conferences, and was listened to with marked attention as a very oracle of piety and wisdom, notwithstanding his abruptness and even asperity of manner, which contrasted

strongly with the sweet and gentle condescension which distinguished M. Olier and his followers.

M. Olier was emphatically the friend of the clergy; and in nothing was his charity more singularly displayed than in the kindness and liberality with which he received all ecclesiastics,—and indeed, all laymen also,—who came to make a spiritual retreat under his direction. The care and attention he paid them extended to every particular; and it was one of his invariable rules that their maintenance should be provided for at the sole expense of the Community, although voluntary offerings were not refused. He imposed only one condition—that ecclesiastics should wear their clerical garb and conduct themselves in all things as became their sacred profession. He allowed of no exception. Thus, a certain Abbé of quality, M. Nicolas de Vallavoire, who was not distinguished in the world for the gravity of his deportment, having been nominated by the King in May, 1650, to the see of Riez, signified his intention of making a retreat at St. Sulpice. The fact of his doing so might have been taken as a sign that he was desirous of changing his whole manner of life, but M. Olier, who chanced to be absent at the time from Paris, took the precaution of directing M. de Bretonvilliers to give the bishop elect a respectful admonition that he must be prepared to comply strictly with all the rules of the institute, or he could not be received at the Seminary. That he did actually make his intended retreat, and must consequently have submitted to the prescribed regulations, we have incidental proof of a singular kind. It happens that Mademoiselle de Montpensier, known in history as "the Great Mademoiselle," who during the troubles of the Fronde was in the habit of intercepting and opening all letters addressed to the Court, mentions in her *Mémoires* having found one from this same Abbé de Vallavoire to Cardinal Mazarin, written at St. Sulpice; the last place in the world, she remarks, from which one would have expected to light upon a letter addressed to that personage. The purport of the letter was to suggest a plan for reconciling the Duke of Orleans with the royal party.

As an instance of the powerful influence exercised by the Community on the outside world, M. Faillon relates how a Canon of Cologne, whose manners were little in accordance with the sanctity of his profession, being accidentally present at a public conference given by M. de Foix, was so touched at heart that on the same day he discharged all his servants, with one exception, sold his equipages,

and on his return to Cologne applied himself to repairing by a mortified and edifying life the scandal he had previously given by his laxity and worldliness.

Many devout and holy men resorted to M. Olier for counsel; among whom may be mentioned M. Jean Poincheval, who lived and died at Paris in the odour of sanctity, and of whom it is recorded that he scarcely ever left his chamber except to go to the altar or the confessional, or to visit the Curé of St. Sulpice. Were any ecclesiastic aggrieved by the rich and powerful, M. Olier stood boldly forward in his defence, and never ceased his exertions until redress had been obtained. The Curé of Arcueil, M. Gervais Bigeon, a doctor of theology and a man of the highest integrity, had been grossly insulted and, indeed, violently assaulted at the very door of the church and in the presence of his flock by the *seigneur* of the place, who, in his fury, had gone so far as to assail this good priest both with imprecations and with blows and, after knocking him down, had kicked him unmercifully as he lay on the ground, tearing his cassock with his spurs. The name of this lordly ruffian was Théodore de Berziau, and the outrage was committed on the 30th of May, 1643. The Parliament of Paris took up the affair, but the parishioners, dreading the great man's vengeance, dared not make any formal deposition, and nothing would have been done had not M. Olier addressed an energetic appeal to all the Bishops with whom he had any personal acquaintance, as well as to St. Vincent de Paul, who had been appointed a member of the Council of Conscience,* calling upon them to lay the matter before the Queen Regent, and in the name of religion and justice demand satisfaction for the outrage. It was but one instance, he declared, among many, in which, as was notorious, the nobles presumed upon the impunity which their crimes enjoyed to oppress and maltreat an unoffending priesthood. The General Assembly of the Clergy also, acting at his instance, presented an earnest remonstrance in the same influential quarter, and with such success that the *seigneur* of the village was compelled to make public reparation for his violence.

* This council was instituted by Anne of Austria with the object of assisting the Crown in the nomination of properly qualified ecclesiastics to the highest offices in the Church. It consisted of six members: Cardinal Mazarin, the Chancellor Séguier, the Grand-Penitentiary Charton, M. Potier, Bishop of Beauvais, M. Cospéan, Bishop of Lisieux, and Vincent de Paul, whom the Queen placed at its head, reserving to herself the presidency. An account of the measures introduced by the Saint will be found in *St. Vincent de Paul et les Gondi* by M. Chantelauze.

EXTRACT FROM M. OLIER'S CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CANONICAL HOURS.

"Matins and Lauds, which are said at night, denote the praises of Heaven rendered to God by the Saints and Angels in glory; and so we may consider the other Hours, which are said in the daytime, as the prayers of this life: viz., from Prime, at six o'clock in the morning, till Vespers, at six o'clock in the evening.

"The Christian life, which is a life divine, is the life of Heaven begun upon earth. Hence the four Little Hours, which comprehend the whole day, are composed of a single psalm, in imitation of Heaven, where there will be but one psalm and one song of praise. This single psalm is divided into four Hours, representing the universality of the supplicating Church; and these four Hours are said at intervals of three hours, and in each three psalms are recited, or, rather, three divisions of the same psalm. And here we must observe the wonderful care of the Church at once to honour and remind us of the sacred mystery of the Most Holy Trinity; for, at intervals of three hours, we find three psalms, all which three make up but one, as the Three Divine Persons are one only God.

"The beautiful distribution of this psalm throughout the day aptly denotes the establishment of the divine life of the Christian religion in us, which is an imitation of Paradise; where there is one never-ending song of praise, in which each moment is occupied in giving glory to God. This is why we chant that great and divine psalm of David, *Beati immaculati in via* (Psalm cxviii.), wherein we see the hidden life of God within us entirely unfolded; and this psalm extends through all the Little Hours, to show that every hour we ought to ask of God that we may thus live, and be filled unceasingly with that divine life, in order that we may live in Him every moment of our life upon earth.

"At six o'clock the day closes, and we begin to reckon the hours of the night. Hence these prayers, according to the intention of the Church, are chanted in the evening, about six o'clock, which is the time at which the evening star called Vesper begins to appear: hence the name Vespers. Then we begin to chant the praises of God and of Jesus Christ, ascended into His glory, which is the beginning of all the glory of the Blessed. Compline signifies the completion of the prayers of men and of this present life in Jesus Christ, who by the close of His Life and by His Death merited for us the happiness and the glory of the life to come. Hence all the psalms of Compline speak only of our Lord suffering, who in Heaven, where He is exalted in the fulness of His glory, continues the memorial of His state of passion, as being the subject of His glory and of the beatitude which is the recompense He would set before men. The Hour of Compline is not, properly speaking, reckoned among the separate Hours; it is, in fact, part of Vespers, of which it forms the complement (*completorium*), that is to say, the termination and completion of the prayers.

"The whole Christian year is designed to honour Jesus Christ in His mysteries, or in His saints, and throughout all this time you will find only one single day set apart for honouring the sacred mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, and even that without an octave, although one more solemn would be due to it than for all the other mysteries conjoined. And even on that day commemoration is made of the Sunday, which is not done on the Easter or the Pentecostal festival. If there be only this one day specially set apart to honour the Most Holy Trinity,

it is in order to show that the worship we render thereto cannot as yet take full possession of our souls, but that this perfect adoration must await our entrance into Heaven, where, being wholly consummated in Jesus Christ, after having long adored and contemplated Him on earth, we shall be, like Him, an everlasting sacrifice of praise to the glory of God. Meanwhile God the Father allows Himself to be, as it were, forgotten in the world, as if He desired to receive homage only in His Son. This great God, in acknowledgment of the love which His dear Son has testified for Him by His death, would make Him partaker of all His glory, and even, as it were, hide Himself in Him, so as only to receive glory through Him.

"Jesus Christ, indeed, manifests in Himself all the perfections of His Father: His might, His knowledge, His love, and all His fulness: '*In quo inhabitat omnis plenitudo divinitatis corporaliter* (In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally.' Col. ii. 9). He is the perfect image of the life of God, as God; having received all the life of His Father to preserve it, and distribute it to all the saints. This is why, after Jesus Christ, the saints are set forth as images of the perfection of God and of His divine life; and why we have every day brought before us the holy martyrs, and their heroic and divine acts, which show forth the perfections of God in them. Thus we have a St. Martin cutting his mantle in two for a poor man, which shows the charity of God; a St. Paulinus selling himself for his brethren, which shows also the love of Jesus Christ; a St. Agnes, in the midst of torments, displaying the might of God in her feebleness and in her bodily weakness; and so, too, in St. Alexis, hidden under the disguise of a beggar at the steps of his father's door, and become the sport of the domestics, we see the humility of Jesus Christ suffering abasement in the world and despised by His servants. In a word, everything we behold in the Church is but a picture of the beauties and perfections of God in their exalted sublimity."

CHAPTER IV.

ATTEMPT TO EXPEL M. OLIER FROM ST. SULPICE.

A GREAT work was doing, and great successes had been wrought, and a whole army, as it were, of auxiliaries had gathered about him, and he enjoyed the countenance and support of many in high places; but never for a moment was M. Olier deceived. He knew—for God had told him—that a heavy persecution awaited him, and that, ere three years had run their course, he should be driven with ignominy from his parish; but he knew also that, whatever might be his personal sufferings, the trial would serve only to bring about the accomplishment of all that he designed to do. Even thus far his path had been anything but smooth or free from contradictions, and a host of foes beset him on every side. To establish the Seminary on a firm foundation, it was necessary that it should be erected into a Community, but the Abbé de St. Germain, who had conceived a prejudice against the projected institution, refused his consent. Without engaging in overt measures of hostility, he threw all the weight of his influence on the side of M. Olier's adversaries, and did his best to embarrass his proceedings. Thus, among the priests who had given up their posts when M. Olier entered on the duties of the parish was a Cordelier who had abandoned his Order and got himself secularized. This man, because he was known to be opposed to the new Curé, and would therefore be a ready instrument in resisting and counteracting all his efforts at reform, the Abbé wished to be restored to his former functions; and to find, if possible, some ground of complaint against the directors of the Seminary, he took upon himself, in virtue of his powers as Visitor, to interrogate the inmates as to the manner in which they were being trained for the ecclesiastical state. In short, he adopted every means in his power to harass M. Olier and oblige him to quit the Faubourg; for he knew well that, the Seminary once solidly established, that

zealous pastor would leave successors behind him who would perpetuate the work which he had inaugurated. M. Olier's zeal, too, had raised up many adversaries among the great and powerful, who openly or covertly threw obstacles in his way. Several of the old clergy also, who had never forgiven him for disturbing their self-indulgent ease, caballed against him; the churchwardens, some of whom were of the highest rank,—including, for instance, Gaston, Duc d'Orléans and the Princes Henri and Louis de Condé, father and son,—thwarted and opposed him; many of the civil magistrates resented his interference and the constraint he had laid upon them by obliging them to fulfil duties to which they were wholly disinclined; finally, and above all, the libertines of the parish, who were bent on his destruction, only awaited an opportunity to wreak their meditated vengeance. But in the midst of these alarms he possessed his soul in peace, convinced that to indulge his natural fears and misgivings, and speculate on what would become of him if his enemies were triumphant, was displeasing to God, who would have him look simply to the present, and repose in confidence on His Providence for the disposition of the future. So, like his Divine Master, he continued to fulfil the mission with which he was intrusted, embracing willingly in his heart all the shame and suffering which he knew was fast coming upon him.

It had become necessary to erect additional buildings for the increasing number of seminarists, and it was with difficulty he could obtain from the Abbé de St. Germain and the churchwardens permission to construct three tenements in the garden of the Presbytery at his own entire expense, even on the condition that they should form part of the domain and afford accommodation to the lay persons employed about the church. The foundations had been laid and the works were already in progress, when the wardens, as much out of hostility to M. Olier as from a desire to gratify the former Curé, M. de Fiesque, who wished to preserve the garden of the Presbytery in its entirety, threw obstacles in the way, while some of his personal friends represented to him the risks he was incurring in erecting at so great a cost, and on ground which was not his own, a building which might not, after all, be available as a seminary. M. Olier was therefore constrained to put an immediate stop to the works which had been commenced, and wait until Providence should enable him to obtain a site whereon he might raise a building which should remain in his own possession, and for which he might have all

possible security that it would be devoted for ever to the purpose for which he destined it. Such a site presented itself in a piece of ground belonging to one of his friends, M. Blaise de Méliand, Procurator-General of the Parliament of Paris, and situated in the Rue du Vieux Colombier, in close proximity to the church of St. Sulpice. It was a large inclosed garden, containing three tenements, to which he at once transferred a number of ecclesiastics, both from Vaugirard and from the Presbytery, there to remain until the larger building which he contemplated could be erected. The contract was signed on the 27th of April, 1645, by M. Olier in conjunction with M. de Poussé and M. Damien, and he was put at once in possession of the property, the purchase-money being 75,000 livres; which sum, however, he was not at present in a condition to pay down.

No sooner was it known that he had relinquished the design agreed upon, and was meditating a more extensive undertaking, than he was assailed with a storm of ridicule and reproaches; but his reply was always the same: "He who has begun the work will in His own time bring it to a conclusion; we must not distrust the mercy of God." Seeing, however, how implacable was the hatred of his enemies, and not knowing to what extremities their violence might carry them, he, on the 2nd of May, being the feast of St. Athanasius, repaired with M. de Poussé and M. Damien to Montmartre; and there, in the presence of P. Bataille, they renewed the solemn engagement before contracted in 1642, never to abandon the work of the Seminary, and at the same time made an entire surrender to God, for His sole use and service, both of the ground and of the buildings they had purchased, renouncing all personal right and ownership in them, although of necessity retaining the nominal possession of them. Yet, with all his unwavering confidence in God and despite the supernatural peace which reigned undisturbed in the depths of his soul, he was not insensible to the unceasing opposition he encountered, and feelings of sadness would at times weigh heavily upon him. On the 25th of May especially, being the feast of the Ascension, he was thus cast down and dispirited, when an interior voice said to him, "Thy work shall be accomplished." "Not mine, Lord," he answered; "the work is wholly Thine;" but the words, as he says, filled his heart with light and joy, and he knew that God accepted him as the servant of those whom by His grace He should bring into the Seminary.

The three years of promised quiet had now all but expired;

already, in the month of January, two devout persons had warned M. de Bretonvilliers * of the approaching persecution, and from time to time M. Olier would himself speak to his more intimate associates of some great trial which was in store for them, bidding them hold themselves prepared, and beg fervently the assistance of God's Holy Spirit that they might be able to bear the cross He was about to lay upon them. The first rising of the tempest showed itself in a quarter where it was least of all expected. The relatives of the former Curé, irritated at seeing a stranger in possession of a benefice to which they considered that one of their own number had a prior claim, sought to have M. Olier expelled from the parish; but, finding all their efforts fruitless, they endeavoured to make M. de Fiesque himself a party to their design. They represented to him that the priory he had received in exchange was of far less value than he had a right to expect; that his simplicity had been imposed upon, and that his honour no less than his interest demanded that he should be re-instated. These representations were loudly seconded by such of the old clergy as disliked the reforms introduced by M. Olier; they assured M. de Fiesque that since his removal nothing but disorder and confusion had prevailed, and that in relinquishing his parish he had deserted and ruined his flock. The poor man, who was naturally both weak and credulous, thus beset by false friends, fell readily into the trap, and, utterly forgetting that the exchange had been effected, not only at his own repeated instances, but on the very terms he had been the first to propose, allowed himself to be cajoled into a belief that he had been deceived and ill treated. There were circumstances, too, at the time which unhappily lent a colour to his complaints. The Priory of Clisson, which originally belonged to the Benedictines of St. Jovin, had in the year 1626 been converted into a simple benefice by an arrangement between M. Olier's father and the monks, and from that date had been occupied by four secular priests, who performed all the offices of the church. The monks, however, now wished to rescind, or, rather, to ignore the arrangement to which they had been parties nearly twenty years before, and, in vindication of their pretended rights, had sent two of their body to take possession of the Priory under the titles respectively of sub-prior and sacristan. They had further deputed a chaplain to reside within the walls, as though the benefice were vacant; and all this without

* Some account of this admirable man and of his reception into the Community will be given in Part III. He succeeded M. Olier as Superior of St. Sulpice.

opposition or even protest on the part of M. de Fiesque. Their next step was to obtain the royal authorization for their acts; and the judges who were commissioned to inquire into the case had ruled that the abbey was to all intents and purposes a conventual establishment, relying for their conclusion merely on the fact that such had been its ancient constitution, as was evident from the very disposition of the buildings. Accordingly, they seized the revenues in the name of the religious, and pronounced them to be entitled to all arrears of rents since the date of the alleged secularization. It was at this juncture that M. de Fiesque was induced to publish his formal case of grievance against M. Olier, in which he set forth that he had been surprised into an act of resignation which in law as well as in equity was null and void, and had been fraudulently put in possession of a benefice in place thereof, from which he had been ejected by the monks of St. Jovin with the express warrant of the Crown.

It may be conceived with what undisguised joy and exultation a charge so gross and scandalous was received by M. Olier's enemies, who felt that they could now proceed against him with some show of justice, and even of legality. Some, indeed, went so far as to declare publicly that he ought to be driven from the parish, put in the pillory, and sent to prison. One of the charges brought against him was the having introduced a more frequent celebration of the Benediction of the Holy Sacrament without the permission of the churchwardens, although the parish had incurred no additional expense in consequence, for, as already related, on September 1st, 1644, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon had founded a special endowment for the purpose. Unhappily, the churchwardens themselves, instigated by certain of the older clergy, sided with his adversaries and actually instituted legal proceedings, nominally against the officers of the Confraternity, but really against M. Olier himself under whose direction they acted, with a view of having the foundation annulled and the novel practice suppressed. Judgment, indeed, was given in his favour, and the right to receive bequests for such objects, without consulting the parochial authorities, fully confirmed, but the part which the churchwardens had taken in the matter emboldened the more violent spirits to persist in their opposition, and on the 2nd of March, 1645, being the first Thursday in the month, after Benediction had been given but before the Blessed Sacrament was restored to the tabernacle, several persons, among whom—to their shame be it recorded—were four priests, broke out

in loud invectives against M. Olier and his colleagues; one of them using language of a most profane and outrageous character, which was received with peals of laughter by the rest.

Among M. Olier's most powerful opponents was, as already mentioned, the Prince Henri de Bourbon, to the great grief of the Princess, who zealously seconded the Curé's pious endeavours. Accustomed to regard ecclesiastics in the light of civil servants, who were to submit in the discharge of their functions to his personal caprice, the Prince not only expressed in general terms his dislike of the reforms which had been introduced into the parish, but did not scruple to interrupt the order of the services when they failed to meet his approval. Thus, on one occasion, being the feast of All Saints in the previous year, he gave vent to his ill humour in a manner to attract the notice of the congregation. It was his fancy at times to sing in choir with the clergy, but, the chant on that day being of a graver kind than suited his taste, he endeavoured by voice and gesture to quicken the movement, and persisted in doing so although the choristers kept to the measure prescribed, causing thereby both discord and confusion. This headstrong man now openly espoused the cause of M. de Fiesque, and ranged himself among those of M. Olier's adversaries whose avowed purpose it was to deprive him of his office.

In the midst of all these threatenings the servant of God did nothing towards diverting the persecution which he knew was coming, or protecting himself from its assaults. He made no attempt to justify himself or to summon to his aid any human means of defence. All he did was to pray for his enemies, and especially for the Abbé de St. Germain and M. de Fiesque; offering himself again and again to drain the cup of affliction to the dregs, if such were the will of Heaven. One day (he writes), when reflecting on the unjust judgment which had been passed upon him and the contempt in which it would involve him with the great people of his parish, he allowed some thoughts about the future to occupy his mind, and he asked himself what would become of him if his adversaries were able to execute all they designed against him. But it was shown him that such forecastings were not pleasing to God; that the soul which has abandoned itself to Him ought to look only to the present and repose all its trust in His merciful Providence. On his colleagues, however, these hostile proceedings had a most depressing effect. Every day they saw their enemies gaining courage from the

criminal apathy or, rather it may be said, the passive connivance of the local magistracy; and they felt persuaded that the insults and menaces with which they were assailed would soon be followed by open acts of violence, and that they would be expelled with ignominy both from the parish and from the Seminary. M. Olier had entered on his charge in the month of June, 1642, and in this same month, three years later, they had all lost heart. Even his closest friends, the fellow-labourers on whose fidelity he most relied, and on whose adhesion the whole edifice he had constructed seemed to rest—M. du Ferrier, M. Picoté, M. de Bassancourt, and M. de Sainte-Marie * —shared the general discouragement. It would be impossible, they declared, to resist the powerful combination formed against them; moreover, the work they had undertaken was too much for their means and their strength; expenses were daily increasing, while resources were failing and debts were accumulating. Some of the ecclesiastics had openly declared their intention of quitting the Seminary, or, at least, of returning to their families until affairs became more settled; others were restless and uneasy, varying in their minds from day to day and from hour to hour. In short, all was confusion and dismay: as it was with the Master, so with the servant; there was none to comfort or stand by him in the time of trial. Nor was a Judas wanting to betray him: two of the servants of the house, whom he had treated with particular confidence and affection, treacherously took part against him, and one of them, fearing lest he should lose his employment if M. Olier were compelled to leave the parish, entered into secret relations with the former Curé and abstracted a paper which had an important bearing on the question which was pending in regard to the Priory of Clisson.

By the side of M. de Fiesque's friends and abettors arose another faction, louder and more violent in its hostility and bent on far more desperate measures. It was composed of libertines and profligates of both sexes, who, infuriated by the perseverance with which this good pastor pursued them to their most secret haunts, were determined to be satisfied with nothing short of his expulsion and that of his whole community. Their numbers were swelled by a multitude of grooms and lackeys, a race notorious for their disorderly conduct and ready for any outrage. In less than a week both parties were fully prepared, and it only remained that they should join forces, and appeal to the passions of the mob, to excite

* M. de Foix had already been made Bishop of Pamiers.

a popular commotion which may be said to have been the prelude to the barricades of the Fronde and the civil war that followed.

It was early on the morning of the 8th of June, 1645, being Thursday in Whitsun week, that M. du Four, a gentleman attached to the household of the Duc d'Orléans, came to apprize M. Olier of the formidable conspiracy which was being organized against him; tidings which were speedily confirmed by another person, who assured him that an immediate attack was threatened, and that if he remained in the Presbytery it would be at the certain peril of his life. The only use he made of this warning was to prepare himself, not to avert, but to meet the approaching trial. He repaired to the church, as usual, in his surplice, and said Mass, offering himself in union with the Adorable Victim to drink the bitter draught for which he had so long thirsted. It was about eight o'clock when he returned, and he had scarcely entered the Presbytery when it was besieged by a furious crowd, shouting that they had come to expel the intruder and restore the rightful pastor. From all the neighbouring streets came rushing fresh parties of men and boys, who assailed the house with volleys of stones. M. de Bretonvilliers, who presented himself at a window, was struck on the head by a paving-stone, which, however, only slightly injured him; and before the doors either of the church or of the Presbytery could be secured, some of the foremost of the rabble had made good their entrance, and were busy pillaging or destroying whatever fell in their way. At the first sounds of the tumult below M. Olier had thrown himself on his knees, and was repeating the words of his Lord, "If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," when a party of ruffians, headed by one of the former clergy of the parish, burst into his chamber, seized him violently, dragged him downstairs, showering upon him kicks and blows, and bore him, or, rather, threw him, out into the midst of the excited multitude, who received him with yells of derision.

Holding a loaded pistol to his head, his assailants now carried him through the neighbouring streets, his surplice and cassock hanging about him in tatters, amidst the hootings of the mob, who continued to heap upon him every manner of insult and outrage. And now, while thus cruelly maltreated, a great grace was vouchsafed to him, for he was favoured with a vision of St. Sulpice, the blessed patron of the parish, who sustained and comforted him with the assurance that the ignominy he was undergoing and the state of

abandonment to which he was reduced for the love of God and His truth would only the more effectually secure his triumph and that of the cause for which he suffered.* But neither was he left without natural defenders. St. Vincent de Paul, informed of what was occurring, hurried to the spot and, regardless of the danger he incurred, strove to penetrate through the crowd to the rescue of his friend. No sooner, however, was he recognized by the rabble than, forgetting the inestimable services which his charity had rendered to the poor of the capital, and seeing in him only the adviser and supporter of their obnoxious pastor, they refused to let him pass and assailed him with menaces and blows, while he, good, generous man, offered to all their violence the opposition only of a most enduring patience, and continued crying, with that imperturbable good-humour which never deserted him, "Strike St. Lazare as hard as you please, but spare St. Sulpice." Another ecclesiastic, M. Pons de Lagrange, Curé of St. Jacques du Haut Pas, of whom mention has been already made, succeeded in forcing his way through the crush and protecting M. Olier by receiving on himself the blows which were aimed at his friend; an act of devoted courage, which, Marie Rousseau was wont to say, was subsequently rewarded by this good priest being miraculously saved from death by poison, which had been given him in revenge for the assistance he had rendered M. Olier and his community on this memorable occasion.

At length those who had hold of M. Olier, fearing to lose their share of the plunder, left him in the hands of the populace, when a number of his friends, who had mingled with the crowd, took advantage of the movement to draw more closely about him and, affecting to treat him as a public criminal, contrived to screen him from the blows which were levelled at him, and to convey him in safety to the palace of the Luxembourg. Meanwhile the rioters were carrying off or destroying the furniture of the house, laying hands on any money or valuables they could find, appropriating even the provisions of the Community; then, having sufficiently gratified their vengeance and their cupidity, they abandoned the place to the fury of the mob. Some, however, who amidst all the frantic excitement had not forgotten the original cause of offence, set about walling up two openings in the inclosure of the garden, which had been made to facilitate the conveyance of materials for

* This remarkable fact is mentioned by M. de Bretonvilliers in his biography of M. Olier.

the intended building; and, as there was no mortar at hand, they supplied its place by staving in the heads of some casks of wine and making therewith a mixture of earth and plaster.

In the Luxembourg the man of God was received with all the respect and consideration due to his exalted virtues. The Maréchale d'Estampes entertained him in her own apartments, and lavished on him every attention which his situation demanded. At the first outbreak of the tumult both priests and seminarists, seeing their inability to contend with so furious a multitude, had betaken themselves to flight, and for some days many of them did not know where M. Olier had found a refuge nor even whether he were still alive. M. de Bretonvilliers, however, on learning the place of his retreat, immediately hastened to join his friend, in a state of the greatest anxiety and alarm, and was amazed at finding him as calm and self-possessed as if nothing had occurred. But that which impressed him most was his extraordinary humility and charity. While others were reprobating the conduct of his enemies in no qualified terms, M. Olier, on the contrary, spoke of them with so much moderation and affection, and suggested so many excuses for the violence with which they had treated him, that M. de Bretonvilliers could not forbear bidding him, in a whisper, be more cautious as to what he said, lest in his wish to exculpate others he should make himself out to be the guilty party. But the man of God merely smiled, and continued to speak lightly of the whole matter and to impute the best intentions to all who were concerned. "Ah! wretched man that I am," he said, "it is I who by my infidelity throw all these hindrances in the way of God's work; my unworthiness is the sole cause of them all."

The parish was now left without a pastor, and from Thursday to Saturday the Presbytery remained in the possession of the mob. During these days the services of the church were interrupted, and even the Viaticum was carried to the sick without any ceremony or other outward demonstration, for fear of provoking fresh outrages should M. Olier's priests be seen still exercising their ministerial functions among the people. This closing of the parish church and total cessation of divine worship within its walls, which obliged the faithful to resort to the convent chapels in order to hear Mass, threw a gloom over the Faubourg and caused a panic among its inhabitants such as modern France has long been familiar with in its antichristian revolutions.

CHAPTER V.

M. OLIER RE-INSTATED IN HIS PRESBYTERY. THE SEMINARY ERECTED INTO A COMMUNITY.

THE violent commotion which had been excited and the glaring outrages with which it had been attended were of too serious a nature for the parochial authorities to overlook them, however disinclined many among them might be to regard M. Olier's proceedings with favour. Accordingly, the wardens of the church, together with some of the more influential parishioners, presented a formal petition to the Council of State that M. Olier might be re-instated, at least provisionally, in his Presbytery. The Abbé de St. Germain, who, as *seigneur* of the Faubourg, could not countenance excesses which savoured too much of a popular outbreak, was constrained, however reluctantly, to support the application. But it was coldly received by the Council, many of the members of which were incensed against M. Olier, whom they regarded as the cause of the tumult, while others threw the whole blame on St. Vincent de Paul, whom, because the priests of St. Sulpice were commonly called Missionaries, they erroneously supposed to be M. Olier's superior. That truly good and great man, disregarding all considerations of human prudence, generously refused to dissociate himself in this hour of trial from M. Olier and his community. On being asked by his friends why he kept silence when a word of explanation would have disarmed his accusers, he replied that he was doing no more than the maxims of the Gospel required; that he looked upon the work in which M. Olier was engaged as no mere matter of personal enterprise, but as one which concerned the general good of the Church, and which every Christian therefore was bound at all costs to defend and uphold. But, besides being unwilling to comply with the terms of the petition, the Council were apprehensive lest, if their decision failed to allay the popular excitement, the authority of the Queen Regent should be compromised in public estimation.

Accordingly, on Friday, the 9th of June, being the day after the events just related, they relieved themselves of all embarrassment by referring the whole matter to the judgment of the Parliament.* And now commenced a species of contest which, viewed in the light of our modern ideas, must appear passing strange. As soon as it was known that the determination of the affair was left to the Parliament, the enemies of M. Olier began to convass the judges to his prejudice; and Prince Henri de Condé himself went down to the assembly, and inveighed with so much violence against him that it was feared his harangue would have an ill effect even on those who were disposed to look simply to the justice of the case. On the other hand, the Princesse de Condé interested herself with equal zeal and warmth in his behalf, visiting all the judges in succession and pleading his cause with as much earnestness as if he had been one of her own relatives; and her endeavours were actively seconded by the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and other ladies of rank. Dom Tarrisse made a powerful appeal to the First President; and, to crown all, the Queen Regent went in person to solicit the favour of the Parliament for the pastor of St. Sulpice.

All these proceedings were viewed by M. Olier with the same reference to the supernatural in which he loved to regard every event of his life. "In the person of the Prince, who stood in the place of the King" (he wrote), "God was pleased to manifest His anger against me; while in those who defended my cause, I seemed to see the most holy Virgin, the advocate of sinners, who filled their hearts with her own charity and pity. St. Anne, again, to whom I have been in the habit of confiding my temporal affairs, displayed her goodness towards me in the person of the Queen. But for the pleadings of these ladies with my judges, who represented the justice of God, there would have been no peace for me." According to the practice of the time he went to lay the facts of his case before those who were to decide upon them, and, as he passed Notre Dame on his way to the Parliament, he begged his companion to allow him a few minutes, as usual, for prayer. Then, throwing himself on his knees before the shrine of his heavenly Patroness, he remained two hours immovable, absorbed in devotion. To be eager about the success of affairs, and

* It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that the Parliament of Paris had nothing in common with that which in England forms an integral part of the constitution, being, not a legislative, but a judicial assembly. Its power, however, in course of time grew to be very considerable even in a political point of view.

to trust to the influence or the assistance of men, he regarded as an infidelity to God, and more likely than otherwise to ruin even a good cause; and he was used to say, that in times of particular anxiety and trial we ought to be the more diligent in prayer, not only to obtain the strength and courage we need, but also to prevent our having recourse to creatures, and throwing ourselves upon them; seeing that nature, when deprived of heavenly consolations, is so prone to seek for such as are merely human. A friend, who wished to recommend him to the favour of one of the chief magistrates, asked him in what terms he should speak of those who were bringing such calumnious charges against him. "Say," he replied, "that I am under the deepest obligations to them;" and on the other refusing to take such an answer, as being contrary to the truth, he repeated, "the deepest obligations;" adding, "for they help me in gaining Paradise."

The Parliament assembled on Saturday, June 10th, and, happily for M. Olier, one of the judges most opposed to him, and whose influence it was feared would gain many others over to his opinion, withdrew the same day into the country, under the idea that M. Olier would follow him, with the view of soliciting his patronage. But this petty proceeding, which was intended to humble the servant of God, served only to secure his triumph. In the absence of this important personage the Parliament ordered that M. de Fiesque should himself appear before them; that instant measures should be taken to seize the ringleaders in the late outrage, four individuals being designated by name, one of whom was the ecclesiastic before mentioned; and that, unless they surrendered in three days, their goods should be confiscated. It was at the same time ordered that, without prejudicing the rights of either claimant, things should be restored to the state in which they were previous to the outbreak; that, consequently, M. Olier should be reinstated in the Presbytery, and those who were in occupation should forthwith depart. The order was at once executed, and two functionaries of the law, accompanied by a representative of the Procurator-General, proceeded to put M. Olier and his priests in possession of both the house and the church, taking, at the same time, what they conceived to be adequate measures to insure the public tranquillity and the safety of the pastor and his community.

Scarcely, however, had these proceedings been concluded when the tumult recommenced with even greater violence than before. The house was again besieged by an armed multitude, gathered from

the lowest quarters and exasperated to the utmost fury by the tidings that the object of their hatred had been brought back in triumph, and that their own leaders were marked out for the vengeance of the law. Baffled in their efforts to force in the doors, which this time were strongly secured and defended from the inside, some of the more desperate among them began calling for fire. At this juncture M. Le Gauffre, who, as already related, had succeeded Père Bernard, arrived on the scene, and was immediately surrounded by a rabble both of men and women crying out they must have their old Curé back. M. Le Gauffre was devoted to M. Olier and his community, but, convinced, like so many others, that it would be impossible for his friends, in the face of such determined hostility, to maintain their position, and thinking likewise to appease the fury of the multitude by acquiescing in their demands, he replied, "Yes, my children, you shall have your Curé back; only keep the peace, and M. de Fiesque shall be restored to you." But minds were too inflamed, and matters had been carried too far, for anything this good but mistaken man could say to restrain the madness of the populace. Fagots had meanwhile been brought and heaped up against the doors, but, the attempt to set them on fire not being immediately successful, another party of rioters directed their endeavours to gaining an entrance into the house through the adjoining garden. Here again, however, they were met by an insuperable obstacle in the result of their own labours on occasion of the former riot, when they had industriously closed up two apertures in the wall by which an easy access might now have been obtained. The struggle continued for three hours, and the little garrison, hard pressed and well-nigh exhausted, was on the point of yielding, when, just as a body of the assailants had all but succeeded in setting fire to the building, a company of the royal guards appeared on the spot, sent by the Queen, whom M. Picoté, at the risk of his life, had hastened to inform of the pressing danger. At the first sound of the drums the rioters took to flight, and thus, to the joy of M. Olier and his colleagues, all effusion of blood was spared. The Parliament, apprized of what was passing, held an extraordinary meeting, and officers of justice were at once dispatched with orders to seize all persons whom they should find collected in the streets, a proclamation to the same effect was read in the public places, and a detachment of soldiers left at the Presbytery for the protection of the clergy.

Throughout the whole contest M. Olier would not permit his

ecclesiastics to employ any other weapons of defence except that of prayer; and even when the peril was greatest his calmness and equanimity remained unaltered. "The cross," said he, "ought never to deprive us of our peace, for it is the cross that gave peace to the world." The next day, which was Trinity Sunday, he appeared in the pulpit, and addressed his people with all his usual dignity, affection, and zeal; in eloquence he was thought even to surpass himself. There was nothing either in voice or in manner to indicate what humiliations he had endured, or through what dangers he had passed, since he last addressed them. And yet an incident occurred which, slight as it was in itself, might have disturbed a man of stronger nerves, aware, as he was, of the excitement which prevailed. For some time past it had been the practice to have the blessing of the water before the first High Mass on the Sunday, in order that the second might follow immediately, without unnecessary delay. While he was preaching an old woman stood up in her place, and with a quavering, tremulous voice began to accuse him of depriving the people of their holy water; then, emboldened by the silence that ensued, she proceeded to give her opinion freely on other changes he had made, and, having administered, as she thought, a fitting rebuke to her pastor, she looked about her for applause, and sat down again. M. Olier let her have her talk out without interrupting her, and when he saw she was fairly settled in her place, he said quietly, "Ah, well, my good friend, we will think about it." He then resumed his discourse as though nothing had happened.

His colleagues would fain have dissuaded him from venturing outside the doors for fear of endangering his life; but this good pastor would remit nothing of the personal care of his flock, and a circumstance that occurred at the time would seem to show that God approved his holy temerity. He was informed that in a house the inmates of which were among his declared enemies, a young woman was lying at the point of death. He immediately left the Presbytery, without apprizing any of his colleagues, who were deeply alarmed when they were made aware of his absence. He found the sick person in a state of unconsciousness, but, in spite of the representations of her friends, who assured him she was not in a condition to communicate, he sent to the church to have the Blessed Sacrament brought forthwith. Then, taking in his hands the Body of his Lord, he, by the power of Jesus really present and in accents which expressed the confidence of his faith, bade the fever leave her or, at

least, permit her to receive the Holy Eucharist; and, turning to the sufferer, he asked her whether she desired to communicate. To the astonishment of all, the apparently dying woman returned to consciousness, replied in the affirmative, and received the Bread of Life; and so pleasing to God were His servant's faith and courage that they seemed to have obtained the cure of the sick woman, for she immediately rallied, and was soon perfectly restored to health.

M. Olier's enemies were far from being discouraged by the resistance they had encountered, and on the same Sunday all Paris was astonished by a public demonstration, such as probably it had never before witnessed. This was no other than a procession of the abandoned women of the Faubourg St. Germain and the neighbourhood, three hundred in number, going to demand of the house of Orleans the expulsion of the Curé of St. Sulpice, as an intermeddler in the people's affairs and a disturber of the public peace. They had tricked themselves out in their gayest attire, and thought they should be able to pass for ladies of distinction, whose very appearance must command respect. The ruse, as may be supposed, was too gross to succeed, but it served to exhibit the true character of M. Olier's opponents, and the audacious extremities to which they were prepared to go. Nothing disconcerted, however, by the contempt and indignation which the attempt had excited at the Luxembourg and among all respectable citizens, the miserable creatures resolved to try their influence with the Parliament itself. On the Monday, being June 12th, there was to be a *Te Deum* at Nôtre Dame, in thanksgiving for the taking of Roses in Spain by the Comte du Plessis-Praslin, and all the members of the Parliament, with the King and the royal princes, were to assist at it. On entering the hall of the palace, the magistrates found it well-nigh filled with a strange assemblage of women and others, who received them with clamours and menaces. Indignant at the insult offered to them in the very sanctuary of justice, they ordered the hall to be cleared, and issued a decree on the spot denouncing the authors of this fresh outrage, interdicting all public gatherings, and prohibiting all persons, at the peril of their lives, from coming to the hall of assembly in a larger number than four together, under any pretext whatever. At the same time, those who had been concerned in the late demonstration were ordered to retire at once to their homes, under penalty of being treated as enemies of the State without form of trial; and all officers of justice were directed to inflict summary punishment on such as

violated the terms of this decree, and arrest any who might be found using language of a nature to excite fresh tumults.

Measures so determined and severe had the effect of preventing any disturbance by day, but, as more than one attack was made on the Presbytery during the night, it was found necessary to obtain the protection of an armed patrol until all fear of danger was removed. The feast of Corpus Christi was now approaching, and M. Olier, fearing that, if he carried the Blessed Sacrament through the streets, the malcontents might be provoked to the perpetration of some sacrilegious outrage, delegated the office to the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr. Bagni, Archbishop of Athens, himself bearing the humble part of an assistant. For better security, however, the procession was escorted by a company of the royal guards. Some days elapsed before the ecclesiastics, whether students or others, felt sufficiently re-assured to venture on returning. Meanwhile the man of God never omitted for one single morning to offer the Holy Sacrifice privately in the chapel of the Presbytery in their behalf, that they might conquer their fears and regain confidence, at the same time imploring our Blessed Lord to change the hearts of his adversaries, grant the grace of perseverance to converted sinners, and pour down His choicest blessings on his beloved flock, above all, on those who had laboured so generously in his defence. Nor—as need hardly be said—did he neglect to implore the most holy Virgin to preserve from all evil and to confirm in her love the little company which she herself had founded, and which was now so sorely persecuted for her sake and that of her Divine Son. His prayers were heard and granted; for by the close of the octave of Corpus Christi, that is, within fifteen days after his attempted expulsion from the parish, all his clergy had returned both to the Seminary and to the Community, and everything resumed its usual course.

Another sign of the Divine favour was also vouchsafed him at this time, when the work he had begun seemed to human eyes on the brink of ruin. On the 26th of July, being the feast-day of St. Anne, M. Gabriel de Queylus came and offered himself to St. Sulpice. He had been one of the first to enter the seminary at Vaugirard, but without any intention of permanently joining the society. At the age of eleven his family had provided him with the abbey of Loc-Dieu, his great-uncle, Jean de Lévis, who was almoner to Queen Marguerite de Valois, having resigned the benefice, which he had held for eighteen years *in commendam*, and become a simple religious

in the same house which he had governed. M. de Queylus had attracted the attention of Cardinal Mazarin, who then had the supreme conduct of affairs, and was in the sure road to high preferment, but, on being invested with the priesthood on the 15th of May, in this same year 1645, the grace of ordination so wrought within him that, abandoning all his earthly prospects, he gave himself to M. Olier, inspired with the sole desire of co-operating with him in forming a body of priests who should be animated with the true sacerdotal spirit. He proved himself, as we shall have occasion hereafter to see, one of M. Olier's most valuable coadjutors, and by his mortified life, his exact performance of all the exercises of the Community, and his zeal in discharging such offices as were of least account in the estimation of the world, became a perfect pattern of those supernatural virtues which he sought to produce in others.

The irritation caused by the late events was not speedily abated. M. Olier's more moderate opponents, who condemned the violence of the mob, bore their defeat before the Parliament with evident displeasure, and still hoped that by continual vexations they might oblige him to resign his office. With such, ridicule was the favourite weapon; and Henri de Bourbon had the ill grace to offer the man of God a public insult, when duty obliged him to present himself before the Prince; the only effect of which was to fill his heart with gratitude towards one who had furnished him with an occasion of imitating his Master's patience when mocked by Herod and his court. Towards his personal enemies he manifested, not merely a kindly forbearance, but a most tender charity. Hearing that M. de Fiesque was on the point of being arrested at the instance of a powerful noble whom he had offended, he hastened to intercede in his favour, and with such success that all further proceedings were stayed. So far, too, from pressing the execution of the parliamentary decrees against the authors of the tumult, he sought to obtain the liberation of those who were in custody; and, on being remonstrated with for such mistaken leniency, he replied, "Jesus Christ forgave His murderers, and prayed for them; and these, thanks be to God, have not proceeded so far; what they did to me was nothing. Grant that they bore me some ill will, yet, after all, are they not my children? God gave them to me, and, by the help of His grace, I will try to have towards them the heart of a father. David would have no evil done to his son, although he sought his kingdom and his life, and these had no such intention towards me. Ah! if their

salvation depended on the sacrifice of my life, and God enabled me to retain the desire of their eternal good which I now feel, they would all be sure of attaining to the joys of Paradise." Learning that one of his most violent assailants had been thrown into prison, he went to visit him, and, though the man received him with the utmost scorn and insolence, he continued to treat him as though he were his dearest friend; and at length, by repeated solicitations, obtained for him the royal pardon. He continued to evince the same interest in him after he was set free, and when increasing infirmities prevented his paying him any personal attention, he charged M. de Breton-villiers to show him every kindness. So, too, he gratified the charitable feelings of his heart by assisting another of his worst enemies during his last illness, and disposing him for a holy death. To such an excess, indeed, did he carry his charity and forbearance that he would not even dismiss the two servants who, as related, had behaved with such ingratitude towards him; an act of generous compassion which so touched the hearts of the offenders that, filled with remorse, they went and besought his forgiveness; and this true lover of souls, not only cordially forgave them, but, as if to show that every feeling of injury was obliterated from his mind, he even bestowed a post of honour on the one who had most flagrantly betrayed his trust, hoping thus to confirm and deepen in him the compunction which he had manifested for his crime. In short, so many and so striking were the instances of the care and affection he bestowed on those who had borne a prominent part in the persecution against him, that it became a common saying in the parish that, if you wanted to receive any favour from M. Olier, the surest way to obtain it was to do him an injury.

Although, after a while, the agitation in men's minds began sensibly to subside, many of M. Olier's friends, seeing the determined animosity of his adversaries and alarmed for his personal safety, endeavoured to persuade him to leave the parish. They represented to him the difficulties he would have to encounter, and the impossibility of establishing his seminary without the consent of the authorities and in defiance of his numerous and powerful opponents. He replied, "We ought never to abandon God's work on account of opposition; on the contrary, opposition ought to increase our courage. If we allow ourselves to be disturbed by contradictions we shall never do anything for God. Is not the cross inseparable from all the works of which He is the author? In no other way did

Jesus Christ establish His Church, and in no other way can we hope to effect anything. Let the world and the devil rage as they may; cannot He who has hitherto vanquished them continue still to triumph over them? I have undertaken this work solely for His glory, and I will abandon it only when I know that such is His will." His resolution was now to be put to a crucial test. M. Bernardin de Corneillan, Bishop of Rodez, who had long entertained the desire of resigning his see in M. Olier's favour, on learning the difficult circumstances in which the servant of God was placed, seized the occasion to renew his instances and dispatched his nephew in all haste to Paris with an express proposal to that effect. Everything seemed to make such a step desirable, and his friends redoubled their solicitations. The Queen herself, who hitherto had urged him to remain, now signified her desire that he should avail himself of the Bishop's proposal in order to obtain the peace and repose which it seemed hopeless for him any longer to look for in the Faubourg St. Germain. But on the 23rd of July—as M. Olier has recorded in his *Mémoires*—his director, the Père Bataille, having sought light from Heaven in prayer, announced to him that God willed him to retain the charge of his parish; Marie Rousseau gave him a like assurance. Accordingly, his reply to his friends was still the same, that the very difficulties and dangers on which they grounded their appeal were only a stronger reason for his remaining bound to his church; that even to be overwhelmed by the weight of a burden which the Divine Goodness lays upon us is to die a glorious death, seeing that we perish in doing the will of God. If Jesus had considered only Himself, He would not have subjected Himself to the pains which He endured in His Passion and on the Cross, but the desire of His Father's glory and of the world's salvation made Him regardless of His own interests: Scripture, indeed, expressly tells us that He pleased not Himself nor did His own will.* His friends then insisted on the greater means which, as a bishop, he would have at his command for promoting the glory of God; to which he replied in these most admirable words: "Not the service we may render to our neighbour, nor the excellence of the works we perform, nor even the prospect of the good we may do in the Church, ought to be the rule of our conduct, but simply the will of God, to which we ought to adhere solely and unalterably. Though I should be certain of working miracles, though I should see at my disposal the means of

* St. John v. 30. vi. 38. Rom. xv. 3.

accomplishing the greatest works for the Church, and the utmost certainty of succeeding, though even in performing them I should make myself the greatest of all the saints,—I would never undertake them except so far as it was the will of God. And, if I were assured of His will, I would not apply myself to them for the sake either of the greatness of the works themselves or of the glory to be enjoyed in Heaven—for these are not the most perfect rules of our conduct —but because it was the will of my Master, which alone I wish ever to do."

The will of God: and might it not be the will of God that he should resign the charge of St. Sulpice? Might not God have put it in the heart of M. de Corneillan to relinquish his see in his favour? To know the will of God, it had ever been his wont to submit implicitly to the judgment of superiors, even when that judgment was directly opposed to his own inward assurances. He resolved, accordingly, to refer the matter simply and absolutely to the decision of the Abbé de St. Germain. Going to him, therefore, he said that, if his services were agreeable to him, he would continue to devote them to the salvation of the flock with which he was intrusted, and would think no more of the bishopric of Rodez; but that if, on the contrary, he did not deem him a fitting person to have the charge of the parish of St. Sulpice, he would at once withdraw; his sole object being to fulfil the designs of Providence, and this he would be doing by submitting to his judgment as his ecclesiastical superior. Hitherto (as we have seen) the Abbé had been opposed to M. Olier's projects, but Henri de Bourbon, with all his faults, was open to generous impulses, and a disinterestedness so genuine filled him with admiration. He begged M. Olier, very earnestly, not to think of resigning, promised him his protection, and engaged to assist him to the utmost in establishing his seminary. A result so unexpected struck M. Olier's friends with astonishment, and they could not but admire the Providence of God, which had made the persecution which was designed for his overthrow the very means of accomplishing the great work he had at heart. The difficulties they had made so much of had vanished in a moment, and the confidence of God's servant was justified in the sight of all the world.

Meanwhile M. Olier had resumed negotiations with M. de Fiesque, whose requirements, however, were as extravagant as ever. In the first place, he absolutely refused to retain the priory of Clisson; he next demanded, not a pension of 1,000 crowns, as in 1642, but a

clear annual income of 10,000 livres—equivalent at the present day to 80,000 or 100,000 francs—as an indemnification for the alleged wrong that had been done him. M. Olier's friends would have dissuaded him from acceding to a proposal so unreasonable, and urged him rather to resign his pastoral office and concentrate all his energies on the direction of the Seminary, seeing that, if he impoverished himself in order to retain his cure he would be unable to prosecute the great work which was the object of his life. But he replied, "If Jesus Christ bids us give our cloak to him who asks us for our coat, why should we not deprive ourselves of something for one who makes an excessive and unreasonable demand? Besides, money ought to weigh as nothing with us where the interests of Jesus are concerned." The proposal, therefore, was accepted, and the contract signed on the 20th of July, 1645; and now arose a contest of generosity among his friends as to who should strip themselves of their benefices to provide M. de Fiesque with the stipulated income. That gentleman, however, was not to be easily satisfied; several benefices were resigned in his favour, but for one reason or another they were not deemed either suitable or adequate, and it was not until he was offered the well-endowed Priory of St. Gondon on the Loire that he professed himself contented. Strange to say, this benefice was promised without first obtaining the consent of its occupant, M. de Barrault, nephew of the Archbishop of Arles and one of P. de Condren's disciples, who, however, on being informed by M. du Ferrier of the arrangement which had been made, was overjoyed at the confidence reposed in him, and declared that he reckoned it among the truest tokens of regard which his friends could have shown him. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon, it may here be stated, was so touched by this instance of generosity on the part of M. de Barrault that, a few years afterwards, she bestowed upon him a priory of the annual value of 1,000 crowns. Among M. Olier's colleagues who despoiled themselves to satisfy M. de Fiesque's exorbitant demands, should here be mentioned M. Picoté, M. de Sainte Marie (Houmain), and M. de Lantages, and, among his friends, the Abbé Alexandre de Sève, maternal uncle of M. Louis Tronson. It was two years, however, before the business with M. Fiesque was finally concluded, and then only through the intervention of St. Vincent de Paul, whom the Queen Regent had engaged to confer with that intractable person, and who himself liberally contributed towards supplying the sum that was required. M. Le Gauffre, also, who, as will be remem-

bered, in his despair had imprudently assured the rioters that their former Curé should be re-instated, now sought to make reparation for what he regarded as a desertion of M. Olier's cause by large benefactions to the church.

It was about the same time that the affair of the Abbey of Pébrac was definitively settled. M. Olier's attempt to introduce the reform of Chancellade had been frustrated, as we have seen, by the opposition of the monks, who had declared in favour of that of Ste. Geneviève, which, however, they never adopted; and besides, the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, who was Abbé de Ste. Geneviève, had interdicted M. Alain de Solminihac from extending his rule to any other monastery. M. Olier, therefore, had devised a different plan. Possessing full powers, as abbot, to restore the primitive discipline, the thought occurred to him of sending one of his ecclesiastics who should take the habit as a novice, and thus gradually dispose the minds of the religious towards adopting the reform which he sought to introduce. The person he chose for this difficult mission was (as already mentioned) M. Corbel, a man of interior life and habitual prayer, deeply versed in the conduct of souls, and one who by his eminent virtues and, especially, his humility and perfect detachment from the world, was peculiarly qualified to exercise a silent, but not less powerful, influence on those with whom he associated. He was fifty years of age, but, as we learn from M. du Ferrier, he was no sooner apprized of the task designed for him than he expressed his readiness to do whatever his superior had determined upon, as seeing therein the will of God. The only thing he was in doubt about was as to how he should dispose of a hundred louis d'or which he had reserved for any need that might arise; but, on M. du Ferrier bidding him solve the difficulty by giving the money to the poor, he did so at once before he went. When the year of his novitiate had expired, he wrote to ask whether he should be professed, but, as no progress had been made in the direction of reform, it was deemed advisable that his novitiate should be prolonged for another year. To this he assented without making any reply. At the end of the second year he again wrote for instructions as to what he should do, and, as there seemed not the slightest prospect of the religious consenting to embrace a stricter rule, he was directed to lay aside his habit and return to Paris; which accordingly he did with as much indifference as if he had never quitted the Community. As for the hundred louis d'or which he had given away, writes M. du Ferrier, he never said a

word about them, reposing all his confidence in Divine Providence, and desiring to die poor and destitute of all things, like his Master, Jesus Christ. We find, however, from a note appended by M. Faillon, that a few years later he was collated to a rich and populous parish, which he served with a zeal and devotion from which all thought of self was banished. At length, broken with age and toils, he resigned his benefice to an excellent priest, whose poor, small parish he took in exchange, refusing to accept any compensation for his diminished income.

This pious experiment having failed, M. Olier resolved to cede the abbey to St. Vincent de Paul, as a residence for his Missionary Priests, who should labour in Auvergne and the neighbouring parts; and he had commenced negotiations with the religious which seemed to promise success, when this plan likewise was entirely frustrated by the perverse conduct of the Prior, who again affected to be actuated by a desire to embrace the reform of Ste. Geneviève, but who, when it came to the point, proposed conditions in every way so extraordinary—as, for instance, that each of the monks should have a key of the church and of the cloister, with the liberty of going in and out at pleasure, subject to no control—that the Superior-General refused to sanction the arrangement; which, indeed, could not have been carried out without M. Olier's consent. So matters remained till, shortly after the troubles related, M. Olier exchanged the abbey of Pébrac for that of Cercanceau in the diocese of Sens, which was then in the possession of M. Vialar, Bishop of Châlons. It was a benefice of less value than that of Pébrac, but, in proposing the exchange, M. Olier's object was to offer some compensation to that prelate for the sacrifices he had made on his account in the affair of M. de Fiesque. The transaction was formally approved by Louis XIV. on the 23rd of January, 1646. M. Olier was also led to make the cession by the hope that M. Vialar would be able to introduce the reform of Ste. Geneviève, which, in fact, was accomplished three years later. To this end M. Olier increased its revenues, and raised the number of the monks from eighteen, to which his father had reduced it, to twenty-one, as fixed by the ancient constitutions. The servant of God always considered that in the troubles that had come upon him at St. Sulpice he was bearing the chastisement of his father's fault, committed inadvertently and by the advice of indifferent casuists, in procuring him the preferment on conditions not strictly canonical. "The memory of

M. Olier," writes the Abbé Faillon, "is still held in benediction by the inhabitants of Pébrac. They show the chamber in the Abbey which was occupied by the servant of God, and which has been converted into an oratory. On a little turret, at the entrance of the courtyard, his arms are still to be seen; a circumstance which would seem to indicate that it or, at least, some portion of the edifice adjoining was erected by him. This was probably anterior to his establishing the seminary of Vaugirard; for from that time he ceased to use the arms of his family, and substituted in their place the monograms of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph."

The humiliations that had befallen him were not of a nature to soften his proud mother's heart, followed as they were by his refusal of the see of Rodez and the sacrifices he made to satisfy M. de Fiesque's demands; and her vexation found its usual vent in taunts and reproaches. Yet he was not the less assiduous in visiting her from time to time, and the modest expression of his countenance, when in her presence, was a sufficient indication, remarks M. de Bretonvilliers, of the filial respect which he entertained for her, a respect all the more sincere and deep as it had a religious root, for in honouring his mother he felt that he was showing reverence, not merely to an earthly parent, but to the Majesty of the Eternal God. It was his delight to speak to her of our Blessed Lord, and he sought every opportunity to turn her thoughts to the saving of her soul. As this is the last occasion on which her name is mentioned, it may here be stated that, being in the country and hearing that his mother was suffering from an apoplectic attack, he immediately hastened back to Paris and rendered her all the assistance in his power, although at the time he was himself in a state that required the most careful attention, being afflicted with paralysis and suffering from the malady which was soon to terminate his life. His mother survived him a little more than two years, dying on the 1st of June, 1659.

On Wednesday, the 6th of September, 1645, M. Olier,—in conjunction with M. de Poussé and M. Damien, who had been united with him both in the purchase of M. Méliand's house and in the solemn engagement which he made at Montmartre never to abandon the work of the Seminary,—subscribed a formal act of association in presence of two public notaries, as was usual in those times. Therein they declare that, having before their eyes the sensible effects of the benedictions which it has pleased the Divine Goodness

to pour down on the design they had conceived of establishing a seminary,—and seeing that from all sides persons distinguished in doctrine and virtue are continually joining them to bear a part in so good a work,—they have judged that, if the seminary were erected into a corporate community with all due and proper sanctions, it would increase from day to day and bring forth those fruits which the Church, councils, royal ordinances, and assemblies of the clergy have looked for in such an establishment; wherefore, considering that they ought no longer to delay the execution of their design, which has for its object the glory of God and the honour of His Church, under the direction and disposal of their Lordships the Bishops within whose jurisdiction similar establishments shall be founded, after invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit, they engage to form a corporate community, in order to discharge all the functions of a seminary in accordance with the terms and with the spirit of the sacred canons: all under the articles, statutes, and regulations which shall be agreed upon among themselves and those who shall join them as members of the said community. They undertake to be of no charge to their Lordships the Bishops, chapters, or abbots, in the several dioceses or jurisdictions wherein they shall found such establishments, but to contribute thereto solely of their own means and with the aid of the liberality, purely voluntary, of those who may desire to co-operate in this good work, when the seminary shall be in a condition to acquire property.

On the 23rd of October, in the same year, M. Olier had the supreme satisfaction of seeing the Seminary erected into an ecclesiastical community with the sanction and authorization of the Abbé de St. Germain, as *seigneur* of the Faubourg; full power and licence being given to him, as superior, together with his colleagues, to frame such statutes and rules as he and his associates should deem necessary for the due government, discipline, and maintenance of the house, and also to construct whatever buildings might be required for the purposes of the Seminary, and to have a chapel attached thereto. At the same time, the Abbé renounced in favour of the new institute the sum of 7,500 livres, to which he was legally entitled as temporal lord; and M. Olier, in return, not only gave him a participation in all the prayers and good works of the Community, but engaged to have a Mass celebrated every year for his intention, at which all the priests of the Community should assist. This Mass was to be said on the 14th of May, being the day on

which his father, Henri IV., was assassinated; for which reason M. Olier also undertook to have a *De profundis* recited at the end of the same Mass for the soul of that monarch. Later on in the year, the Abbé's authorization was confirmed by letters patent bearing the sign manual of the young King, being then in his seventh year; and in the April of the following year, 1646, all the Bishops of France were empowered by royal letters patent to hold provincial councils every three years for the reformation of manners and the establishment of seminaries for the training of ecclesiastics in their several dioceses.

Thus was the great work accomplished for which the servant of God had so long laboured and prayed, and, it may be added, suffered. In spite of the hostility of the world and the defection of friends, his confidence in the Divine aid and protection had never failed or faltered. "Let us lean only on God," he wrote at this time, "and trust to Him alone, for the success of any work which He has confided to us. Let us look only to Him, and He will guide us securely amid all the tempests that assail us. The more violent they are, the more clearly will they manifest His wisdom, His power, and His love. His adorable perfections are never more sensibly displayed than when the works He has begun succeed in spite of the fury of Hell and the persecution of men. Let us abandon everything to Him, and abide in peace waiting for His succour. Although we should see the whole world rise up against us we must never quit the work to which He calls us, seeing that He is able in a moment to disperse the clouds that have gathered round us and turn our greatest enemies into our most devoted friends. Oh, how little reliance ought to be placed on the great and on the children of men! It were sufficient to see what I have myself experienced in order to be certain of this truth as much as I ought to be. What joy to do the work of God in His Son, and through the ways of humility, poverty, and simplicity! Our Lord has taught me once for all that it is His will that I should withdraw myself from the great ones of the world, and beware how I place any confidence in them. The jealousy of God regarding the work He has committed to me has been shown in this—that He has sent away these great ones and thrust them aside whenever they attempted to take part therein; to the end that He alone might be acknowledged as the author of that which might have been attributed to men if they had given it their patronage and support."

CHAPTER VI.

REVIVAL OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

M. OLIER resumed the labours of his parish with renewed energies of mind and body, and the humiliations he had so recently undergone seemed to enhance the respect or, rather, we may say, the veneration with which he was regarded by all, including even those whose minds had seemed to be most envenomed against him. The piety of the people responded to the zeal of the pastor. His sermons found an echo in the hearts of his hearers, and were productive of extraordinary fruits; all the offices of devotion were largely attended, and the number of penitents increased with such rapidity that it became necessary to obtain the assistance of additional priests.

The Holy Ghost might have employed ecclesiastics of low extraction, as He has commonly done, for the renovation of this parish so notorious for the scandalous lives of the great people who inhabited it, but, as if to accommodate Himself to the prejudices of their caste, He summoned to His service men who, like M. Olier, were as distinguished for their birth and rank as for their character and virtues. The more surely to accomplish the work to which they had been called, He put it into their hearts to practise the most perfect disinterestedness and generous abnegation. They rigorously abstained from accepting any contributions that might be offered them by their people either for the benefit of the Community or for their own personal needs; and in their pastoral visits to the parishioners it was their habit to despatch the business they were upon with as much celerity as was compatible with a due regard to social amenities or with the nature of the office they had been called to discharge. Hitherto, notwithstanding all the advantages which the courtiers had enjoyed in the zealous labours of men like the Pères de Bérulle and de Condren, who both from the pulpit and in the confessional

had addressed them with a freedom and a boldness truly Apostolical, little effect, apparently, had been produced; it was reserved to M. Olier and his colleagues to gather in the harvest of which these great servants of God had sown the seed.

It was by setting before his auditors the mystery of the Incarnation and its consequences—the transcendent dignity with which human nature has thereby become invested and the corresponding depth of degradation into which it is plunged by sin—that he touched their consciences and gained their hearts. He depicted in frightful colours the hideous deformity which sin had worked and still continued to work in the souls of men; in accents of paternal tenderness he described the love of Jesus in dying for them on the Cross, and showed them how by their criminal indulgences they crucified the Son of God afresh and trampled under foot the Precious Blood which He had shed for their redemption. "To repair the woeful disorders which sin had caused, prodigies of power and of mercy were needed: the Eternal Word must become Incarnate to restore this fallen creature; a God-made-Man must come to present to man, in His own Sacred Person, the model of that perfection to which He desires to recall him; and, finally, the Divine Repairer must make Himself our meat and drink in the Adorable Eucharist, in order that He may enter into and unite Himself with us, so that, dwelling in our souls, He may re-instate them in their original condition, and re-make them according to the primal designs of the Creator."

In these last words we see the dominant thought and belief with which this great servant of God was possessed—that devotion to Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist was the one solid foundation on which the reformation of a parish so reprobate as that of St. Sulpice—including as it did the notorious faubourg of St. Germain—could be effected and maintained, and that through the revival of this devotion alone could his people, little and great, learned and unlearned, be brought back to the habitual practice of piety and virtue. "Our Lord," he writes, "desiring to draw men to His Father, has given Himself to them at two several times: once, in the infirmity of the flesh, by His Incarnation; and again, in the power of His Divine Life, by the Most Holy Sacrament. By the first state He came to establish His Church and merit grace and pardon for it; by the other to renew and make it perfect. The first was a state of weakness, and consequently it was not meet that He should employ His

absolute power in His dealings with men. This is why He acted with apparent infirmity, using reasonings, miracles, and prophecies in His endeavours to convince them, without availing Himself of the almighty power of the Holy Spirit, who would have converted in a moment hearts the most hardened in the world. To effect this triumph, He waited for the day of His Ascension, which was to establish Him on the throne of His royal dignity. Then He began to give Himself a second time to men in the Most Holy Sacrament, communicating to them His divine life and making them like unto Himself. This it is which the Church confesses with astonishment and gratitude in the first words of the Office of the Blessed Sacrament: 'Let us adore Christ the King, the Ruler of the Gentiles, who gives to those who feed on Him the rich abundance of His Spirit,' * as if she said, Behold the marvellousness of this mystery and the triumph of Jesus Christ: peoples the most savage, nations the most barbarous, which never yielded to the power or acknowledged the dominion of the Romans, have now been subjected by this King whom they adore. His Flesh which He gives them for food transforms them interiorly into Himself, impresses upon them His own sentiments, and thus He triumphs in their hearts by His meekness, by the purity of His virtue, by the secret charms of His power, and by thus transforming them makes them, with Himself, perfect adorers of His Father. Desiring, then, in this age, not to establish His Church, but to renew it, He must needs act in a manner which accords with this second state.

"Inasmuch, however, as it is not His will to appear again in person to rekindle piety when it has grown cold, He raises up from age to age men whom He fills with a special grace of those mysteries which He desires to revive in the hearts of His people. Such was St. Francis of Assisi, who received the spirit of His Passion so abundantly that, streaming out upon his very flesh and manifesting itself in the sacred stigmata, it renewed in the Church the love of the Cross and taught carnal men the obligation they were under of resembling in their lives Jesus Christ Crucified. And, in like manner, our Lord has shown me that, desiring to renew in our own days the primitive spirit of the Church, He raised up two persons to commence carrying out this design: Mgr. de Bérulle, to procure His being

* "Christum Regem adoremus dominantem Gentibus,
Qui se manducantibus dat spiritus pinguedinem."
Ad Matutinum, Invitatorium.

honoured in His Incarnation;* Père de Condren, in His Life, His Death, and above all, in His Resurrection; but that it still remained to have Himself honoured, after His Resurrection and Ascension, as He abides in the Most August Sacrament of the Eucharist, and thus to renew the sentiments of His Divine Life in the hearts of men.

"Alas! I say it only for the glory of God and of His designs in regard to the vilest and most wretched creature in the world: He has been pleased to bestow upon me myself, as P. de Condren's successor, the grace and the spirit of this Adorable Mystery, to the end that I may teach souls how to live conformably with this state. And yet can it possibly be that God should desire to make His slave, nay, one of His enemies, as I am, an image of His Son, His Only Son, the Victim of the Most Holy Sacrament, by giving me a share in the sentiments of that Divine interior, in order to their being sensibly communicated to souls through me?"

From his childhood, as we have seen, M. Olier had been endowed with a singular grace of devotion to the Blessed Eucharist, and when, in the year 1642, it was proposed to him to undertake the charge of the parish of St. Sulpice, he felt that now the long-sought opportunity was afforded him of promoting Its honour and worship, not only among his own subjects, but in all the provinces of France. "How often," he writes, "when I thought of the neglect with which the Blessed Eucharist was treated in that parish, did I say to myself, 'Oh, if ever I became the pastor of that church, how I would labour to have honour paid to that Most August Sacrament! I would devote myself wholly to Its service, I would myself keep watch before It like an ever-burning lamp, to show to these blind people the majesty

* This opinion was not peculiar to M. Olier; it was shared by the biographers of Cardinal de Bérulle. Thus P. Lerat says that he had the gift of imparting to souls a supreme love of our Incarnate God: "He thought only of Jesus, he spoke only to Jesus or of Jesus, he acted only for Jesus. He undertook everything, he suffered everything for Jesus;" and the Abbé de Cérisy relates how for this end he would have all the houses of the Oratory dedicated to some particular state or mystery of our Lord: thus the house in the Rue St. Honoré was consecrated to the honour of all the glories which accrued to Jesus at the moment of His Incarnation; that of the Faubourg St. Jacques to His silent and ineffable repose in the womb of Mary; that of Orleans to His Infancy." Urban VIII. conferred upon him the title of "The Apostle of the Incarnate Word;" and how truly he deserved it all readers of his works know well.

The remarkable terms in which M. Olier spoke of Père de Condren have been cited at page 49.

of the God whom they know not!'" Nor was it only a powerful impression produced upon his mind, or an ardent desire which he experienced of showing honour to Jesus in this adorable mystery, but He who had chosen him to be His special instrument and likeness, had long before (as we read in his *Mémoires*) vouchsafed to give him a miraculous intimation of His designs. For, being one day in adoration before the altar, he beheld our Lord issue from the Tabernacle—amid flames of fire and bearing a Cross in His hand—and come to dwell within his breast; thus indicating to him that what He Himself was operating insensibly in the Blessed Eucharist, His servant was to effect sensibly in the souls committed to his charge. Of this grace he had abundant evidence on the feast of Corpus Christi immediately before his removal to St. Sulpice. "My heart," he writes, "was all on fire, all consumed with the love and praise of God; and ever since that time I feel to be before God like a poor victim loaded with the sins of all mankind and pleading with Him for their pardon, ready to suffer in satisfaction all possible martyrdoms. Sometimes it was as if my spirit passed into the hearts of men, so as to enter into their needs and make supplication to God for them. At other times I felt my soul multiplied, as it were, in all the places wherever my Master was present; or filled with the divine praises, as I have seen that of Jesus Christ; or desiring to offer the Holy Sacrifice, in order to honour God in every way in which it is possible to honour Him. All these and such-like sentiments are those of my Jesus in this mystery. They are innumerable, and infinitely greater than I can either understand or feel. His goodness makes me a partaker in them from time to time according to my capacity; nor do I experience any difficulty in speaking of all this, for I see what I describe in a light clearer than that of day."

Such, then, were the thoughts which dominated in M. Olier's mind when he first took possession of his parish, and hence the zeal and fervour he displayed in reviving devotion to the Blessed Eucharist by means of repeated Benedictions and Expositions and the establishment of a Confraternity of Adoration. But, notwithstanding all his endeavours and those of his coadjutors, during the first three years of his ministry there was very little apparent change for the better. His efforts were thwarted and counteracted in every manner of way, as we have seen, by the more influential of his parishioners, and, though the people came in crowds to the sacred

offices, attracted by the unusual beauty of the ceremonial, they seemed to be actuated, not so much by a spirit of piety, as by an idle curiosity to witness a grand and imposing spectacle. Thus, to the profound grief of this holy pastor, the devotion of the Forty Hours was so little regarded by the mass of the people that fewer persons were to be seen at St. Sulpice during the celebration than in the other churches, although the population of the Faubourg exceeded beyond all proportion that of any parish in the city. It was not until the malice of the wicked had done its utmost to blacken his character and destroy his influence that M. Olier was permitted to see the fruit of his labours.

Mention has already been made of the heathenish excesses with which the eves of the feasts of the Epiphany and St. Martin were habitually profaned. Nor was it only the lower classes who indulged in these abominations, which were of too revolting a character to bear description; the great lords of the Faubourg also took part in them. It seemed as though in very deed Satan had, for a season, been loosed from Hell and enthroned on earth as king of men. But now a great change ensued.* A large number of the parishioners, including all classes, came to receive communion on those festivals, and also on Quinquagesima Sunday, which had hitherto been regarded only as the day on which the diversions of the Carnival commenced. Indeed, the feast of the Epiphany was made an occasion of general communion, and, to encourage and perpetuate this pious practice, the Sovereign Pontiff granted a plenary indulgence, on the usual conditions, to all who should approach the Holy Table on that day. Never, perhaps, says the Abbé Faillon, was the number of communicants greater than in the parish of St. Sulpice, or the fruit thence accruing more abundant. M. Olier exhorted the people to offer their communions for the conversion of sinners, as being the most effectual way of applying to those poor souls the merits of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ; and, as the Jansenists were not satisfied with deterring the faithful from receiving communion, as has been said, but endeavoured to instil into them the odious and heretical doctrine that the Blessed Eucharist was beneficial only to the recipient and that its fruit could not be applied either to the living or to the dead, M. Olier was most diligent in denouncing these

* Six years after the death of M. Olier the Sulpicians renewed their endeavours to suppress these disorders, and with such success that at last they were entirely abolished.

pestilent innovations. His efforts in this matter were crowned with singular success, for in a parish where but lately the Holy Table had been well-nigh deserted, the number of communicants might soon be reckoned at 200,000 annually, although thirty other churches attached to religious houses were also open for public worship in the Faubourg.

When M. Olier entered on the duties of his parish there was but a single lamp, and that of copper, kept burning in the church, although the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, not only on the High Altar, but also in the Lady Chapel behind the choir. But, one of the priests of St. Sulpice having taken occasion to observe in his sermon that it would be well to have a lamp before each of these altars, on that same day M. Marreau, a notary, presented a costly one of silver; and soon after two other lamps of the same material, worth each six hundred crowns, were given by M. Morel, who was Maître d'Hotel and Secretary of Finances to the King. One remarkable circumstance connected with these benefactions was that these very men, both of whom were wardens of the church, had taken part with M. Olier's adversaries in instituting legal proceedings against him for having established more frequent Benedictions of the Most Holy Sacrament without first having gained permission from the parochial authorities. This may be regarded as a proof of the extraordinary change which had taken place in men's minds consequent on the late violent attempt to expel him from his cure. All three lamps were placed before the High Altar, but this ardent adorer of the Eucharistic Presence was not yet content, and having one day observed, in an exhortation to the ladies of the parish, that, as there had been seven lamps kept always alight before the Ark of the Covenant, as representing the seven glorious spirits who stand ever before the Throne of God, so there ought to be seven lamps perpetually burning, night and day, before the place where our Incarnate God vouchsafes to dwell, the ladies present immediately resolved to complete the number. One was offered, of the value of a thousand crowns, by the Princesse de Condé, to which two, valued at six hundred crowns, were added by three other ladies, among whom was Mme. Tronson, of whom we shall hear more hereafter; the seventh was contributed by M. Olier himself, who also gave a silver chandelier to hold them all; while M. Marreau, who had led the way in these acts of pious munificence, not to be outdone in liberality, asked permission to take back the lamp he had presented, and which had cost

him sixty crowns, and to substitute another of the value of six hundred.*

In the summer of 1648 an event occurred which wrung the heart of God's servant with the bitterest anguish. On the night of July 28th, some thieves gained an entrance into the Church of St. Sulpice with the intention of stealing the silver plate belonging to the confraternity of street-porters. It so happened, however, that the candlesticks and cross had been lent for the feast of St. Anne to the brethren of the chapel lately dedicated to that saint in the Pré-aux-Clercs, and had not been returned. The robbers, not finding these objects in their usual place, did not stay to examine the contents of the chest, but turned it upside down, by which means they did not perceive a chalice and other vessels which lay between the chasubles and which, if discovered, might have satisfied their cupidity. Disappointed, therefore, of their expected booty, they forced open the tabernacle on the altar of the Blessed Virgin and, taking out the ciborium, emptied the Sacred Hosts on the elbow of one of the confessionals. But, even while perpetrating their sacrilegious crime, the wretched men seem to have retained some feeling of reverential awe, for, a few of the sacred particles still adhering to the vessel, they did not dare to carry them away, but shook them out by striking the ciborium on the side of the confessional, the wood of which the next morning bore the marks made by its edges; and, some of them falling on the ground, they had left them lying where they fell.

Horror and consternation seized the inhabitants when news of the outrage spread through the Faubourg. As with one consent all diversions ceased, crowds flocked to the churches to testify their grief and to make such reparation as piety suggested for the dishonour that had been shown to their dear Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. One only thought seemed to pervade all classes,—that of penance and satisfaction to the Divine Justice for a crime of which each accused himself as being the guilty cause. Indeed, it was the common belief that, in patiently enduring so impious an outrage, God was but waiting to avenge Himself by the infliction of some national scourge. In expiation of the sacrilege, the Baronne de

* In 1691, it was deemed expedient, in order to relieve the urgent necessities of the State, to send the chandelier with five of the lamps to the royal mint. A chandelier and lamps of some inferior metal were substituted for them; but in 1732 they were restored by M. Languet, who also placed seven lamps in the choir and eight in the nave.

Neuvillette condemned herself to eat the coarsest bread and drink only water for the rest of her days, in order to appease the anger of God;* and when, on the following Sunday, M. Joly, one of the priests of the Community, recounted to the people all the circumstances of the sacrilege, the whole congregation were melted to tears, and sobs and wailings filled the church. But the chief mourner and the chief penitent—need it be said?—was the holy pastor himself; and nothing less would satisfy him than a public reparation, proportioned—if such a term be applicable—to the magnitude of the offence. With the consent of the Abbé de St. Germain he announced from the pulpit the order of the observances, proclaiming a three days' fast to commence the following day.

Accordingly, on Monday, August 3rd, 1648, as the bells gave forth their lugubrious sound, the people, all in mourning garb, assembled in the church of St. Sulpice; thence they walked in procession, chanting psalms as they went, to the Abbey of St. Germain, where High Mass was said "*pro remissione peccatorum*—(for the remission of sins)." The gloom of the day added to the universal sadness; the very heavens seemed to weep, for the rain continued to fall in torrents, and, owing to the insufficient drainage usual in those times, so flooded the streets that the penitential crowd, among which were ladies of the highest rank, had to wend its way through pools of water. On Thursday and the two succeeding days the Blessed Sacrament was exposed with unexampled splendour. The whole Court contributed whatever there was most magnificent and rare for the august ceremony: tapestry, and pictures, crystal vases, candelabra, and

* At the end of five or six weeks, she became so ill that her confessor forbade her continuing her penance. This lady, during her married life, had been the acknowledged leader of fashion; her sole ambition was to excel all others in the sumptuousness and elegance of her table, her equipage, and her dress. But on the death of her husband she felt herself called to give herself wholly to God, and through the prayers and counsels of M. de Renty she found courage to obey the call, and consecrated the remainder of her life to works of piety and charity. To break at once with the world, and mortify in herself all remains of pride and human respect, she inflicted on herself a sort of public humiliation, going to visit a lady of her acquaintance in the Luxembourg, attired in a robe of patchwork. She had no sooner made her appearance at the palace-gates, than she was surrounded by a tribe of children, who followed her to the grand staircase crying out, "The Queen! the Queen! the Queen of Tatters!" A still greater affront awaited her in the presence of the fine lady she came to visit, but she was enabled not only to despise the world, but to despise being despised by it, and she conquered it in conquering herself. She died on the 10th of April, 1657, eight days after M. Olier.

lustres of gold and silver. The Marquise de Palaiseau offered the hangings of her bed, worth 20,000 livres, to be used as a canopy; and, though she was warned as to the damage they must sustain from the smoke of more than 300 tapers, she persevered in her entreaties that what had been made for vanity should be sacrificed to the glory of Jesus Christ. Her offer was therefore accepted; and, as if to reward her piety and devotion, at the end of the three days' ceremony they were found not to have received the slightest tarnish. The whole length of the nave was covered with cloth of gold; the choir was hung with red velvet, on which columns were wrought in bold relief, ornamented with capitals embroidered alternately with gold and silver, and all so skilfully designed that it might have been taken as actually elaborated out of the precious metals; while in the midst of golden candlesticks and vases, darting flashes of light, raised high upon a pyramidal throne and surmounted with a crown glittering with jewels, appeared the Object of all this honour and glory; the Object, too, of the unceasing adoration of a countless throng which day and night filled the church to overflowing.

On the first and second days of the Exposition two of the most celebrated preachers of the capital addressed the assembled multitudes; on the third, being the feast of the Transfiguration, the shops were shut, all servile work was suspended, and the whole clergy in the parish, secular and regular,* carrying lighted torches, accompanied in procession the Blessed Sacrament, which was borne by the Papal Nuncio. The Queen Regent walked behind the canopy, attended by all the princes and princesses of the blood and a large number of the courtiers, all wearing mourning; the people followed in vast crowds. The Duchess of Orleans had caused a magnificent altar to be erected at the entrance to the Luxembourg, and the ceremony was concluded by a solemn act of reparation, pronounced

* A circumstance is related in connection with this procession which affords a curious instance of the jealousy with which the Benedictines of St. Germain maintained their prescriptive rights. M. Olier, absorbed in his devotions, inadvertently strayed from his place behind the monks, and walked among their ranks. Now, the parish of St. Sulpice (as was said above) was under the jurisdiction of the Abbey, and, for fear that this act of its Curé should be taken in after time as a precedent derogatory to their authority and liberties, they obliged M. Olier to make a formal declaration, in writing, to the effect that, in intruding himself among them "in the aforesaid procession, contrary to all custom, right, and reason," he meant to assert no manner of precedency or encroachment on their privileges. This declaration was signed on the 9th of December following and inserted among the archives of the Abbey.

by M. Olier with so much fervour, and with such an abundance of tears, that none of the assistants could refrain from weeping.

Three months after the ceremony above described, one of the perpetrators of the deed was discovered in the person of a soldier of the guards. Information was given by the individual in whose house he lodged, which led to his quarters being searched, and the ciborium of St. Sulpice, together with other property similarly obtained, was found hidden among his goods. The Parliament of Paris condemned him to provide funds for a lamp to burn perpetually before the tabernacle in the Lady Chapel, in addition to that which was already there; to make a public act of reparation before the doors of the church; and, lastly, to suffer the punishment of death for the sacrilegious robbery; which sentence was accordingly carried into execution on the 16th of June, 1649. M. Olier himself attended the unhappy man in prison, and accompanied him to the scaffold.

From the day on which the sacrilegious crime was committed no Mass had been said at Our Lady's altar; it was left stripped of its ornaments, with its broken tabernacle exposed to view. It was not long, however, before M. Olier replaced it with another, richly adorned; and, to perpetuate for ever in the parish the memory of the event, he surrounded with a balustrade the spot on which the sacred particles had been scattered, and inscribed upon a marble tablet, in letters of gold, the principal circumstances of the sacrilege and its reparation. Before this tablet he hung a silver lamp, which was to be kept burning day and night; and, to offer to Jesus Christ a homage still more worthy of the love He bears us, he directed that, on the first Sunday in August in every year, the Blessed Sacrament should be solemnly exposed in reparation for all the insults offered to Him in the Holy Eucharist. But even yet his devotion was not satisfied: it was now that he established the Perpetual Adoration of which mention was before made, and for which he had long been preparing his people. He chose twelve of his flock, the most devout to the Sacramental Presence, who should unite themselves in spirit to the twelve Apostles, the first and chief adorers of an Incarnate God; and these again he bade associate with themselves twelve other worshippers, who thus together with them should represent the four-and-twenty ancients of the Apocalpse, who fall down continually in adoration before the Throne of the Lamb. Each had his hour assigned him, and the whole day was thus distributed among them. Into this association others were admitted from time to time,

who shared the devotion of the chosen brethren and supplied for those who, through illness or other pressing necessity, were unable to attend. In fine, a detailed account of all the particulars of this reparation was circulated through the provinces, which had a powerful effect in producing a more tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and a deeper awe and reverence towards that tremendous mystery.

But it was especially in Paris that the ardour displayed by M. Olier produced at once the greatest effects. One after another the Curés of the several churches adopted the practices which were observed at St. Sulpice in honour of the Blessed Sacrament; the General Assembly of the Clergy commended them to the attention of the Bishops throughout France; and, in fine, the Prior of the Abbey of St. Germain, in virtue of his office as Vicar-General, invested their observance with an almost obligatory force in all the churches and chapels of the Faubourg. Thus he prohibited the Blessed Sacrament being exposed, even during the octave of Corpus Christi, unless one or two ecclesiastics were present to adore, as well to protect the August Presence against irreverence as to offer an example of personal piety to the people. St. Sulpice thus became celebrated for the beauty and solemnity of its services, as it has continued to the present day. Queen Anne of Austria, who had never entered its walls, on account both of the slovenliness with which the functions were performed and the rudeness of the building, which resembled that of a village church, was now a frequent attendant at the offices, as were also the Duchesse d'Orléans, the Princesse de Condé, who came all the way from Chantilly, the Princess her daughter-in-law, the Prince de Conti,* the Duchesse de Longueville, Mlle. de Montpensier, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, the Comtesse de Brienne, the Maréchale de Schomberg, the Duc d'Uzès, and many others of the courtiers, whose devout and reverent behaviour, as they knelt in silent adoration before the God of the Eucharist, was a touching sight to witness, especially to those who, like Marie Rousseau, had deplored the state of desolation in which both church and parish had lain for many dreary years, and who knew, moreover, that all this religious display was no empty pageant, but an effect of the same divine grace which dwelt in the heart of their holy pastor and gave him such power over the hearts of others.

* The Prince de Conti was the second son of Prince Henri Bourbon-Condé.

We learn from M. Olier himself the nature and the source of that marvellous influence which he exercised over all who approached him, especially in regard to the devotion with which he inspired them towards the Blessed Sacrament. Writing to his director, he says, "Ever since our Lord vouchsafed to give me a participation in His quality of victim, it is no longer I that live, but He liveth in me. Every day, after receiving communion, I become, as it were, sensible of His presence in my members. He informs me, He vivifies me, as though He were my soul and my life. He operates in respect to me, after a manner, what He operates in regard to His own Sacred Humanity; at His bidding I move, and at His bidding I stay my steps, He opens my lips and closes them, He rules and directs my life; in a word, it is He who does all things in me. Desiring that I should represent Him in His Adorable Sacrament, He is not content with thus entering into my heart and dwelling therein to perfect it, but by His dwelling in me He produces in souls the effects of divine communions, and infuses Himself into them in a sort of sacramental manner. Many of those who come to me are powerfully affected, and carry away with them a desire to live by His divine life. In fine, as faithful and holy souls come to derive their virtues and graces from out the Most Holy Sacrament, so in His goodness He is pleased to make me a sort of sensible presence of that Divine Mystery, and souls the most exalted feel themselves attracted towards me with a holy and religious fervour. It is Jesus Christ within me who works these effects, for, while speaking to them, I feel His virtue go out from me and pass into them, imparting to them of His lights and graces, as He does in the Holy Eucharist.*

"Thus, to give some examples, I was lately administering Extreme Unction to a young ecclesiastic of the house, M. de Villars, and, while I was addressing him in words which our Lord put into my mouth, he experienced this spiritual hunger of which I speak. M. Molé, again, one of the chief magistrates of the Parliament of Paris, on occasion of my visiting him to request the verification of my letters patent, a matter in which I had encountered difficulties hitherto insuperable, felt his heart expand ere I had scarcely addressed a word to him, and, throwing his arms round me, he said, in the joy which possessed him, 'I felt a virtue go out from you

* This effect, it is related, was experienced in a singular degree by Marie de Valence, the holy widow of whom mention has been made

which has gladdened and comforted my soul;' and, as he spoke, he was transported in God and filled with the unction of His Spirit.* On Septuagesima Sunday, when confessing one of our community, I became sensible of a certain supernatural influence which, issuing from my breast, communicated itself to him. I remained some time without speaking, leaving its effects to flow into his soul, and he also continued silent during the whole time. On the feast of the Annunciation, M. de Bretonvilliers, on coming to confession to me, was similarly affected, and, not being accustomed to these divine experiences, he did not know what was happening to him. It seemed as though he was unable to leave me, and, in amazement,

* This circumstance will be again alluded to in connection with the registration of the letters patent. Readers of P. Bacci's *Life of St. Philip Neri* will not need to be reminded of the marvellous spiritual influences which were experienced by his penitents and others who conversed with him, and which seemed to emanate from his very person. This is not the place for entering on so wide a subject, but it may just be observed that, granting the reality of the extraordinary phenomena to which has been given the name of "mesmeric," and of which we hear so many astounding instances in the present day, it in no wise militates against the supernatural character of such influences and attractions as have been ascribed to canonised saints and other holy persons. There must be natural powers, or potentialities, however occult and undeveloped, which form what we may call the basis of extraordinary operations, whether on the part of God Himself or of His ministering spirits, or, again, by divine permission, of the devil and his angels. The well-known work of Benedict XIV. on *Beatification and Canonization*—a portion of which has been translated into English at the instance of the late Father Faber, under the title of *Heroic Virtue* (Richardson, 1852)—supplies, at least, the principles on which such extraordinary phenomena, whether natural or preternatural, are reconcilable with the teaching and sanctions of Holy Church in respect to the marvellous facts recorded in the Lives of Saints and other great Servants of God. See, in particular, chap. x. vol. iii. entitled, *Of Transport, Ecstasy, and Rapture.*

How little, again, do we really know of what we call the "forces of nature;" while of their primary, operating causes we know nothing at all. As Mr. Lilly has well said in his instructive and highly suggestive work, *Ancient Religion and Modern Thought*, "The most accomplished master of natural science is as little competent to explain the physical attraction as he is to explain the spiritual. He cannot get behind the *fact*, and if you press him for the reason of it—if you ask him why the magnet draws iron—the only reason he has to give you is, 'Because it does.'" Pp. 224, 225. Having quoted thus far, we may give the writer's conclusion: "The phenomena which we call natural I view as alike the expression of the Divine Will: a will which acts, not capriciously nor, as the phrase is, arbitrarily, but by law. . . . It is by virtue of this law that the sick are healed, whether by the prayer of faith or the prescription of the physician; by the touch of a relic or by a shock from a galvanic battery; that the saint draws souls and that the magnet draws iron." P. 228.

he said, 'I feel you verily in my soul.' Yesterday, being called to a dying person, and having to speak to him for four or five hours together without ceasing, a benediction accompanied my words which astonished me. It was not I who acted; these wonderful effects proceeded from the Most Holy Sacrament, the virtue of which is shed abroad in souls. On the feast day of the great St. Basil, being at Chelles, a celebrated abbey of the Benedictine Order, whither I had gone to visit the body of St. Bathilde, Queen of France, the Abbess, a lady of singular purity and profound humility, experienced this ineffable power of Jesus Christ, which, issuing from my soul, passed into hers. Filled at once with the Spirit of God, she felt herself constrained to summon her community to come and hear the word of God, which enlightened and inflamed her heart and the hearts of many who were with her. Then, casting herself upon her knees, she besought me to return, for that she had experienced in my person a most joyful perception of the presence of Jesus Christ."*

Subsequently he speaks of the prominent part which he is called upon to bear in all the great enterprises of charity and piety which are being undertaken in Paris, and attributes the influence he is enabled to exercise and the success which attends his efforts to the power and beneficence of Jesus in the Sacrament of His Love, referring wholly to Him both the marvellous effects which are produced and the veneration which he himself inspires. He does but figure and represent to men that load-star of all faithful souls. "It is from no love of me," he writes, "that people manifest these sentiments regarding me; I have no more reason to glory therein than the sacred species, the tabernacle, or the ciborium would have if they could see the multitudes worshipping before them and the countless hearts enamoured of That which they inclose. It is from

* The abbess here alluded to was Madeleine de la Porte de la Meilleraye, sister of the Marshal of that name. She came of a Calvinist family, but had the happiness of embracing the Catholic faith. Entering into religion, she was chosen by Louis XIII. to be abbess of Chelles in her thirty-third year; on taking possession of her office, she presented herself in mean attire, closely veiled, and bearing a crucifix in her hands. Her administration was a source of benedictions to her community, and was distinguished by such an abundance of miracles, wrought through the relics of St. Bathilde, that the Archbishop of Paris gave permission for an annual commemoration of these marvels, on July 13th, in the abbey church. This, in all probability, was the occasion of M. Olier's visit to Chelles in 1646. Madeleine de la Porte died with the reputation of great sanctity, in 1671, in the seventy-fifth year of her age.

no love of them or of their gold or silver that the faithful come before them, but from the love of Jesus who dwells in them. And so it is the love of Him whom I bear within me which attracts so many persons to me of every condition and state in life."

The one special mission with which God had intrusted His servant was, as we have seen, the sanctification of the clergy: this was his vocation; and it will readily be perceived how powerfully the supernatural state the effects of which have been described conduced towards enabling him to fulfil it. "Priests can be holy" (says the Abbé Faillon), "and can duly discharge the functions of their sacred office, only by conforming their life to that of Jesus Christ abiding in the Blessed Sacrament; according to the exhortation which is addressed to them at their ordination: '*Imitamini quod tractatis*—Become like to that which you handle.'" Sharing so perfectly as he did the dispositions of the Divine Victim, and manifesting them ever after a sensible manner, this true pastor of souls had only to speak out of the fulness of his heart to communicate to others some measure, at least, of those sentiments with which he was himself possessed. The sublime character of the priesthood was the constant subject of his instructions to the seminarists, and one to which he was ever recurring in his writings; as appears in his *Treatise on Holy Orders*, and in the little work entitled, *Pietas Seminarii Sancti Sulpitii.*

"Priests," he wrote, "are like living Tabernacles, wherein Jesus Christ dwells to sanctify His Church. For, to be truly priests, they ought to bear Jesus Christ within them, labouring with all their might to conform themselves to Him in this mystery, both as to their exterior and their interior. Exteriorly, they ought to be utterly dead to themselves, like the sacramental species, letting themselves be maltreated, and, if needs be, trodden under foot and pierced with knives, as Jesus Christ has been a thousand times in this Sacrament by heretics. Therein our Lord has no use of His senses, of His hands, His ears, His eyes; and thus ought priests to abandon themselves entirely to God, that He may make what use He pleases of their senses and of their whole selves. Interiorly, our Lord is in this Sacrament all transformed in God, all changed in God; He is no longer subject to the assaults of infirmity or corruption; He is clothed with incorruptness, immortality, agility, subtilty. And herein priests ought to be like unto Him, called as they are to participate in this August Mystery; their interior ought to be all divine, all transformed in the Divine perfections, however ordinary they may be in

their outward appearance, and dead to all things. The sacramental species, holy as they are by close proximity to the Son of God, are not in themselves sources of grace. Their inmost being has been changed, transformed, and transubstantiated in Jesus Christ; and thus do priests sanctify the Church, not by their exterior, but by the inmost being of their souls transformed in Jesus Christ, who vivifies it.

"The species of bread and wine in the Most Holy Sacrament have no reason to glorify themselves for the graces which they contain or for the good they operate in souls; they are not the causes of them, being but a light and fragile bark which easily corrupts, although they have been brought into such close proximity to the Divinity. Thus also it is with the holiest souls: they are but the tegument or rind which may soon be spoiled and become corrupt; and in like manner, as, when the species of bread and wine become corrupt, the Body and Blood of our Lord cease to be present, so, on the very instant of their becoming corrupt, the Holy Spirit would forsake these poor rotten vessels and leave them in their corruption." Then, in a spirit of self-abasement, he adds, "Alas! what a vocation is mine; poor, blind sinner that I am, who would deserve to be cast into the fire, as a tree that bears no fruit; wretch that I am, to be cumbering the ground in which God has planted me, and abusing His goods and His life! Ah, Lord, grant that I may possess the qualities which Thou displayest in this August Sacrament and the dispositions with which Thy Heart is filled. Impart to me Thy divine love for the Church and for the souls which Thou confidest to me. In vain, Lord, should I be honoured with the office of representing Thee exteriorly on earth, if I were not clothed with the qualities necessary for communicating to souls the blessings which Thou bestowest upon them by Thy Spirit in the Most Holy Sacrament."

This humble and fervent prayer was answered in a remarkable manner. In ten years the parish of St. Sulpice, which was as notable for its depravity as for its extent and importance, became an example and a source of edification to all France; and M. Olier, despite the humiliations to which he had been subjected, acquired an influence, not only with the people generally, but with the members of the Court and with those who may properly be styled men of the world, which may truly be regarded as extraordinary and marvellous. Of this we shall see abundant proof in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

M. OLIER'S INFLUENCE WITH THE GENTLEMEN OF HIS PARISH.

IN nothing were the fruits of his devotion to the Blessed Eucharist more strikingly manifested than in the facility with which M. Olier succeeded in forming a company of gentlemen united together for the twofold object of promoting their own sanctification and labouring for the conversion of those with whom they associated in the world. It was composed of about a hundred persons of high rank, most of whom had acquired considerable military distinction, and were still employed in the army or about the Court. Previously to enrolling themselves they went through all the exercises of a retreat, and bound themselves to make public disavowal, as far as discretion allowed, of the false maxims of the world, while continuing outwardly to lead an ordinary life, free from any marks of singularity, and to fulfil all the obligations incidental to their position in society. One principal object at which they aimed was to abolish duelling, and to discountenance the practice of profane swearing, so common among men of their calling. They were distinguished by a particular devotion to the mystery of the Passion, by which name the Company was designated, as pledging them to be as ready to bear reproach, and even to imperil their lives in resisting sin, as men of the world are forward to shed their blood in the vindication of what they term their honour. They also engaged not to go to the army, or even on a journey into the country, without first imploring the assistance of the Blessed Virgin in her own church of Notre Dame, nor to omit offering her their thanksgivings on their return.

Of these associates, one of the most celebrated was the young Baron de Renty,* who at P. de Condren's death had taken M.

* A Life of this great exemplar of perfection in the world forms the fourth volume of the "Library of Religious Biography" edited by the present writer.

Olier for his director. To a fearless, generous spirit, and a frank and manly bearing, he united, in an eminent degree, all the devotion and fervour of a sincere and humble Christian. He was one of those men of high principle, genuine piety, and mortified life whom God seems to have raised up at this time to quicken the smouldering zeal of His clergy; and such was the respect and confidence he inspired that he discharged the office of spiritual director to many ecclesiastics as well as laymen. His personal sacrifices and exertions in behalf of the poor were heroic in their character, and there was scarcely an institution, whether of charity or of piety, in which he did not take an active part.

Another of the associates was Antoine de Salignac, Marquis de la Motte-Fénelon,* who had gained himself a name by extraordinary feats of bravery. At the age of sixteen, on learning that his brother had been killed by a cannon-ball at the siege of Le Catelet, he went to request Louis XIII. to promote him to his company; and, on the King's objecting to his youth, he replied, "Sire, I shall have the more time to serve your Majesty." In him an intrepid and, indeed, headstrong courage was associated with a charity and a kindness of heart as chivalrous as it was religious; in the midst of a hot engagement he would expose himself to a murderous fire in order to rescue his wounded soldiers, lifting them on his shoulders and bearing them to the trenches that they might receive the Last Sacraments. But all his fine qualities were tarnished by a passion for duelling, the practice of which he defended with an energy and a sophistry which it was alike difficult to combat. On his begging M. Olier to undertake the direction of his conscience, the servant of God replied, "What can I do for a man who has not the resolution to renounce duelling?" "Why, what harm is there in it?" said the young soldier. "Can a gentleman put up with an insult without resenting it?"—"Well," answered M. Olier, "since you do not feel the evil of the practice pray to God to enlighten you; and promise me that, when you are convinced of the contrary, you will set your face against duelling and labour to convert duellists." The Marquis frankly pledged his word, and at the end of his next campaign returned a different man, boldly determined to make a public protest against the unchristian practice. By M. Olier's advice he retired awhile from active service, refusing several important posts offered to him by the Queen Regent, and devoted himself to the

* Uncle of the illustrious Archbishop of Cambrai.

interests of his soul. He married Catherine de Monberon, daughter of the Comte de Fontaine-Chalandrai, a lady remarkable for her piety, who died at the age of twenty-seven in the odour of sanctity. Left thus a widower in his thirty-fourth year, the Marquis had thoughts of embracing the ecclesiastical state, but M. Olier dissuaded him from his design, being convinced that he would do as much good by remaining in the world. For the servant of God he ever manifested a tender and reverent affection, and continued to the day of his death a devoted friend of the Seminary of St. Sulpice.

A third associate, equally celebrated for his personal courage, and, it must be added, his forwardness to display it in "single combat" —for such was the title of honour bestowed on duelling—was Abraham (subsequently Maréchal) de Fabert. He had seen thirty-five years of military service, had been present at fifty-nine successful sieges, and had obtained universal renown by the prodigies of valour he had performed, when he yielded to the power of divine grace and became one of M. Olier's most energetic coadjutors. Nor must mention be omitted of M. du Four,—to whom allusion was made in a previous chapter,—who was employed by M. Olier in any affairs in which tact and discretion were particularly required. Such was his spirit of self-sacrifice that at times the servant of God was obliged to admonish him to have a due regard for his health. "I am waiting for tidings of you," he writes, "before seeing M. Vincent (de Paul), and, not receiving any, I am afraid you are not well. I beg you will take care of yourself for God, and recruit your strength for His divine service. Our Lord has so much need of labourers that it is not right to disable them for reaping His harvest and rob Him of the servants He has engaged for Himself. Live and die in the service of Jesus, and die so often to yourself that it may be a substitute for the sacrifice of your life, for thereby you will render equal honour to God. Constrain Him thus to prolong His victim's days. If you immolate yourself in spirit, if the sword with which you slay yourself be spiritual, if love consume you to His glory, God will not be obliged to mortify you exteriorly."

That ardent spirits such as these should range themselves under the direction of the pastor of St. Sulpice was a proof alike of his ascendancy of character and of their earnestness and devotion. An amusing anecdote is related which may serve to illustrate both; we have it on the authority of one of the parties concerned. He was driving one day to call on M. Olier when, on the Pont Neuf, he met

a friend and invited him to join him. After the other had taken his seat, and the carriage-door was closed, he told him, laughingly, he was taking him to that good priest whom he had once promised to go and see. His friend was loud in his remonstrances, and tried to open the door; but he ordered the coachman to drive the faster, and defeated all his attempts at escape. Finding resistance useless, the other gradually submitted, and his captor succeeded in conducting him to M. Olier's room. The owner, however, was absent, being engaged in hearing the confession of an officer of distinction, who was a commandant of the Order of the Saint-Esprit, and they employed their time in turning over some of the pious books that lay on the table. When M. Olier came in he imagined that the stranger, who received him with much respect, wished to go to confession, and accordingly, making a sign to him to lead the way, proceeded forthwith to his private oratory. On entering, he fell on his knees, and the young soldier, taken by surprise, followed his example. M. Olier then seated himself, and commenced reciting the usual form, perfectly unconscious of his visitor's embarrassment, who saw that he was expected to make his confession, whether he would or not. Retreat there was none, and, indeed, having gone so far, there seemed nothing for him but to go on; so he began his *confiteor*, as if he had come for no other purpose in the world. His companion, meanwhile, sat wondering with himself at the whole proceeding: why he was excluded from the interview, and why it lasted so long. At length the two reappeared, looking extremely well satisfied at the result of their conference, and the young men shortly after took their leave. When they were alone, the one began complaining to the other of not having been allowed to have a share in the conversation; on which his friend informed him of all that had occurred, declaring that he had felt himself under the influence of an attraction which he was powerless to resist, and had never made a better confession. The narrator adds that he could not resist telling M. Olier shortly afterwards the truth of the matter, who was much amused at the blunder he had made; and as for the penitent, he often recurred to his singular adventure and never ceased blessing God for the extraordinary grace with which he had been favoured.

It was observed, indeed, that the servant of God had a peculiar gift for winning the confidence of military men, and exercising a salutary influence over them. At the meetings of the associates he spoke to them as a father might speak to his sons, answering their

questions and solving their doubts, and encouraging them to practise the maxims of Christian perfection with a manly courage and zeal. One day that he was exhorting them to make God their end in everything, a gentleman present remarked on the extreme difficulty and, indeed, the virtual impossibility of adhering to this rule when mixing with those whose conversation and habits of life were merely worldly, even when they were not positively vicious. "This," replied M. Olier, "is the very reason why they who live in the world should be the more closely united to God, that they may remain uncontaminated in the midst of sinners. Besides," he added, "it is not our bodily presence that makes us belong to the world, but an attachment and an affection for its miserable vanities; let us never cease begging God to inspire us with a contempt for them."

The piety enkindled among these gallant gentlemen was not slow in communicating itself to their subordinates, who, again, became apostles to the men under their command. Thus, in a certain regiment, the captain having been converted to ways of piety, it was not uncommon to see even the common soldiers engaged in reading such works as those of Louis of Granada or P. Saint-Jure, and taking their turns to adore before the Tabernacle. Nor was this fervour evanescent in its quality, for, fifteen years afterwards, M. de Lantages, having occasion to pass through a garrison town in which this regiment was quartered, had the consolation of observing that these pious practices were still faithfully observed. Among other striking examples, mention ought to be made of a certain *seigneur* who, from being a man of very worldly life, became a model of perfection. So devoted was he to the practice of mental prayer that he would spend four or five hours daily on his knees in the church of St. Sulpice. Although he was not rich, he never refused an alms to a poor man, and, while moving in the highest circles, persevered in the practice of the most rigorous mortification, wearing beneath his gay attire a shirt of hair and an iron girdle.

To fix more deeply in the minds of his disciples those maxims of self-denial and interior crucifixion which he unceasingly inculcated, he published a *Catechism of the Interior Life*, especially for their instruction, wherein, adopting the form of question and answer, he insisted on the necessity of mortifying the old Adam and living the life of Jesus Christ, and showed in detail that prayer was the one great means both of acquiring solid piety and maintaining it; to which he added prescriptions for its exercise. He composed also

another little treatise entitled, *An Introduction to the Christian Life and Virtues*, which seems to have been particularly intended for the Company of the Passion and may be regarded as the complement of the former work. M. Olier thus took rank among the most enlightened and judicious masters of the spiritual life; his writings were largely read, and were approved by persons of high authority, among others, by M. de Maupas, then Bishop of Le Puy, who did not scruple to declare, in the commendation which he affixed to one of his works, that it might be placed in the same category with those of à-Kempis, Blosius, and St. Francis de Sales.

The association of military men which M. Olier had formed was eminently successful in checking and bringing into obloquy the frightful mania for duelling which then prevailed. To what an excess this vicious passion was carried may be estimated by the fact (already stated) that in a single week no less than seventeen persons were killed in these miserable combats in the parish of St. Sulpice alone. The infatuation was not extinguished even by the near approach of death, as appears from the account which M. du Ferrier gives of what occurred in the case of M. de La Roque-Saint-Chamarant. He was a very brave man and proud of his courage; a Christian, too, after a fashion; but in this one particular so obstinate and so infatuated that, on M. du Ferrier endeavouring to make him promise never to take part in a duel again, he consented, but added the proviso that a friend whom he named did not ask him to act as his second. It was in vain to represent to him the insult he was offering to God by preferring to His laws the wishes of a friend,—a friend, too, by the way, who had himself unconditionally renounced the unlawful practice; on what he deemed a point of honour he was perfectly inflexible, and to perish in its vindication was to him the only death worthy of a gentleman. Soon after, he was seized with a mortal illness. The priest who attended him hearing him sighing and groaning as he lay upon his bed, asked him the cause of his sorrow, with the view of imparting religious consolation, and received this startling reply: "Alas! that La Roque-Saint-Chamarant, who has proved his courage on so many occasions, should die thus in his bed;" and in these sentiments he expired.

Hitherto, all means that had been tried to arrest this sanguinary frenzy had proved but of slight avail. The rigours of the law and the censures of the Church were alike disregarded. M. Olier had denounced from the pulpit the severest ecclesiastical penalties

against duellists and their abettors, and several persons who had perished in these detestable encounters had, by his orders, been deprived, as the canons directed, of Christian burial. On the 10th of June, 1650, the Vicar-General of the Abbey of St. Germain, in compliance with M. Olier's earnest request, forbade all the priests of the Faubourg to give absolution to duellists except in danger of death, and then only on their engaging, in the event of recovery, to abjure the practice. In ordinary cases they could be absolved only by applying to himself or to the Penitentiary of the Abbey; and, in default of absolution, they could neither receive the Holy Eucharist nor be interred in consecrated ground. The facility with which confessors had granted absolution contributed much to aggravate the evil, but M. Olier laid strict injunctions on the priests of the Community to question their penitents directly on the subject, and to withhold absolution until they had promised never to fight a duel; and this regulation was subsequently approved and confirmed by the assembled clergy of Paris. But, although these measures effected much, they were not sufficient to disabuse men's minds of the fatal maxims which had been so long accredited in society, and it was only by opposing the principle of Christian fidelity to that of worldly honour that M. Olier at length succeeded in giving an effectual blow to a vice which was, not only practised, but lauded, by the noblest and most chivalrous of the age. On Whitsunday, 1651, the associates assembled in the chapel of the Seminary, and there, in the presence of a large concourse of distinguished witnesses, he received their public declaration and protest, which they afterwards severally signed, that they would never either give or accept a challenge under any circumstances or on any pretext whatsoever. At the same time they engaged to give public expression to their abhorrence of the practice of duelling, as being wholly contrary to reason and to the laws and weal of the realm, and irreconcilable with Christian principle and practice; without, however, renouncing their right to redress in all legitimate ways any wrongs that might be done them, so far as their rank and profession obliged, being ever ready to conciliate those who might sincerely believe that they had received some affront or injury at their hands, and careful to give cause of offence to none.

Such a protestation, proceeding from men whose valour was as unimpeachable as their honour, excited the liveliest astonishment, and the Grand Condé, whose mind was filled with ideas of worldly

glory, could not help saying to the Marquis de Fénelon that, if he had not been so assured of his courage, he should have been dismayed at seeing him "the first to break through such a wall of ice." But astonishment soon gave way to admiration. The Marquis refused a challenge, with a noble intrepidity which was applauded by the whole Court. His example gradually wrought a change in the public mind, and emboldened many a man to despise a worldly prejudice to which he had long been held in bondage. M. Olier's declaration against duelling began to be formally approved in quarters apparently the least likely to be influenced by such means. The marshals of France issued a manifesto, calling upon the gentlemen of the realm to adopt the declaration in all its details, and the most illustrious persons in the kingdom hastened to give in their adhesion to it. Among these were the Prince de Condé and the Prince de Conti, the latter of whom took up the matter with his characteristic energy and induced the nobles of Languedoc to enter into a like engagement; an example which was speedily followed in several other provinces, particularly in Le Querci through the zealous efforts of M. Alain de Solminihac. The States of Brittany declared, as did also those of Languedoc, that any gentlemen who should fight a duel had thereby forfeited their right to a seat in their assemblies. In fine, the King imposed the protestation of the Company on all the members of his court, and appointed the Marquis de Fénelon to receive their signatures. On the 28th of August, 1651, the Bishops of France, in the General Assembly of the Clergy, gave their solemn sanction to the protestation, which was approved by the Doctors of the Sorbonne, who pronounced it to be "a holy and magnanimous resolution," and called on all the nobles throughout the kingdom to adopt it, at the same time declaring that any who approached the tribunal of penance without giving an interior assent to the protestation in question were incapable of receiving absolution or being admitted to the sacraments of the Church.

But, warned by past experience of the inefficiency of all such measures, so long as the laws in force against duelling were partially administered, or were altogether evaded by pardons and private dispensations obtained from the Crown—a practice which had extensively prevailed, not only under preceding reigns, but during the regency of Anne of Austria—M. Olier laboured to procure a new and more stringent edict from the King. Louis XIV. was on the point of declaring his majority, and on the 7th of September, in this

same year, the servant of God had the satisfaction of seeing him inaugurate his assumption of the reins of government by issuing an ordinance of the severest import against blasphemy and duelling, the two crying evils of the time. The principal clauses of the edict against duelling were formulated by the association of gentlemen already mentioned; and, indeed, to them, and to M. Olier, under whose direction they acted, are due the honour and the merit of this most salutary measure. Therein Louis, after recapitulating the enactments against duelling, solemnly swore and engaged, on the faith and the word of a king, henceforward to exempt no person from capital punishment, for any cause or consideration whatever, all remissions and abrogations by royal letters, close or patent, notwithstanding; forbidding all lords and princes of the realm to intercede for such offenders, under pain of his personal displeasure, and protesting that no plea of connection with the princes of the blood, whether by marriage or consanguinity, should be permitted to avail against this his decree.

The severity of this edict, and the impartiality with which it was carried into execution, drew down upon the Marquis de Fénelon a storm of obloquy, the violence of which might have made a less heroic virtue quail. Every calumny which malignity could devise was propagated against him, and his name became a very by-word of contempt in a world of which he had so lately been one of the brightest ornaments; but he remembered the words which he had so often heard from the lips of M. Olier: "If God loves you, He will humble you; and, in exalting the work, He will abase the workman;" and, like a bold soldier of the Cross, he held on his way undaunted. This persecution continued until the campaign of 1667, in which, for the sake of watching over the conduct of his only son, who followed the profession of arms, he served as a simple volunteer. In this character, his military genius and capacity, no less than his gallantry and prowess, won for him such high consideration from the generals and the whole army, as well as from the King, that his revilers were at length silenced and their calumnies forgotten amid the universal admiration and applause. On peace being concluded, he conducted his son and four hundred other young gentlemen to assist the Venetians in the defence of Candia against the Turks. Louis, who guessed his motive, said to him, "Now, tell me the truth; you are undertaking this enterprise in order to withdraw your son from the temptations of the Court?" "It is so, Sire," replied the Marquis; "and, when I think what those temptations are,

Candia does not seem to me far enough." Every morning, before dawn, he prepared his companions for the struggle of the day by acts of devotion, and fought at their head in every *sortie* that was made. His son falling mortally wounded, he ordered him to be borne to his tent, himself continuing at his post; and after the action he assisted at his death-bed and received his last sigh. When he was dying, the young man said to his father, "I confess that I felt an extreme repugnance to this expedition; it took me away from the pleasures of Paris and of the Court; I did not see how it could further my fortunes; I regarded it as an ill-judged enterprise, in which I was sacrificed to devotion; but what caused me greatest pain was a belief that I should never return. I had an abiding conviction that I could not save my soul in the world, and that God would have me die in this expedition, in order to save me in spite of myself. Miserable wretch that I was, I dreaded so great a blessing; but now I know its value, and I thank God, and die content."

M. Olier, however, did not confine his efforts to the suppression of the habitual practice of duelling among the nobles, but strove also to lead all in whom he discerned any encouraging dispositions to a consistent life of piety and virtue. To this end, he sought to draw them under the influence of his counsels, and was urgent in beseeching God to enlist them in His service. And God, writes M. de Bretonvilliers, was pleased, not only to bless the labours of His servant for the sanctification of these gentlemen, but, long after his decease, to perpetuate a like grace and power among his spiritual children. In one single year, more than a hundred persons of rank and distinction made a retreat at the Seminary, with the result that they seemed to be changed men, both by the course of life which they embraced and by the generous courage with which they broke through every trammel which might hinder them from giving themselves wholly to God. A community also was formed of military men and others, who adopted a common rule of life; and, although they were under the direction of a priest of St. Sulpice, they chose one of their own number to be their superior. On every Sunday and holiday they assisted devoutly at all the offices of the Church, but on other days they heard Mass in their own house, where they had a chapel dedicated to St. Maurice. Subsequently, when M. Languet completed the Church of St. Sulpice, they caused a chapel to be constructed therein which was also dedicated to the great soldier-martyr, and still continues to bear his name. Every day

they devoted three quarters of an hour to mental prayer, and recited the Little Office of Our Lady; before dinner they made a particular examen of conscience, and after dinner paid a visit of half an hour to the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church. At their repast some pious book was read, and after night-prayers they kept strict silence. During the day they visited the prisons and hospitals, and assisted the Curés of St. Sulpice in seeking out the bashful poor and informing themselves of their needs.*

A holy emulation was thus excited which affected all classes, and before the end of the 17th century two other similar communities were established in the Faubourg St. Germain; one of which, whose house was in the Rue de Vaugirard, had the celebrated Père Guilloré for its confessor. The impulse thus given was so powerful in its effects that during the remainder of the century those who neglected the practices of religion were regarded as persons who not only failed in what was due to themselves, but brought discredit on their families. Thus, on hearing of the conversion of the Comte de Gramont, who had turned to God during a dangerous illness, that witty sceptic, M. de Saint-Evremond, who was then living in England, wrote to his informant in terms which, despite their cynicism, are indicative of the change which had come over the face of French society. "Hitherto," he says, "I have been contented, like a dull ordinary mortal, with being an honest man, but now it is necessary to be something more, and I am only waiting for your example to turn devout. You live in a country where people enjoy wonderful advantages for saving their souls. Vice is scarcely less opposed to fashion than it is to virtue; to sin is to show you do not know how to behave yourself, and is as much an outrage on good breeding as on religion. Formerly, to be damned in France a man had only to be wicked, now he is vulgar to boot. Persons who pay but little regard to another life are led to save their souls by the duties and proprieties of the present." "Doubtless," adds M. Faillon, "if M. de Saint-Evremond had quitted the social atmosphere in which he lived and returned to France he would himself have been of the number."

The subject, however, has carried us beyond the date at which we had in due course arrived, and we must here retrace our steps.

* This community continued to exist, with certain modifications in its rules, till nearly the middle of the 18th century, when, owing to the diminution of piety which prevailed at that unhappy period, it came to an end, in spite of the strenuous efforts which the Comte de Cherbourg, one of its oldest members, made to maintain it.

CHAPTER VIII.

M. OLIER'S INFLUENCE WITH LADIES OF RANK AND OTHERS.

AS yet only an incidental allusion has been made to the response which the women of the parish made to the appeals of their new pastor; but it was both prompt and generous. In fact, as was to be expected, they took precedence of the men and set them the example, even as their children had gone before and drawn themselves into the ways of piety. His first object was to disenchant them of their illusions and show them the utter vanity of all earthly things. "If the whole world must pass away," he said in the ardour of his zeal, "why waste your time so miserably upon it, and run after vanities which one day will be destroyed and brought to naught, and even now are nothing? O world! thy gold is only of the earth, and the earth will be melted and consumed. Thy honours are only smoke, and will vanish away. Thy pleasures are corruption, and will perish; and all that is in thee will pass away like a shadow. If the fire is to devour all this, with what are we vainly trifling? Alas! let us not allow ourselves to be brought into judgment, let us be the first to judge ourselves. If all is to decay, why should we esteem it so highly?"

These truths so plainly spoken were instrumental in effecting numerous conversions, so that soon there might be seen among the ladies who had been most enslaved by the pleasures and frivolities of the world many a repentant Magdalen, who, with a holy audacity, cast aside the shackles of human respect and declared herself openly on the side of virtue and of God. But one of the obstacles most difficult to overcome was the pride which these ladies took in their mental accomplishments. During the Regency of Anne of Austria, women, as was natural, played a prominent part in the assemblies at Court, and their ambition was to distinguish themselves, not

so much by splendour of apparel and personal adornment, as by the fineness of their wit and the exquisite delicacy of their taste. This spirit of self-display was more opposed to a life of faith than even the grossest vanity or the worst of what are regarded as fashionable vices. Not but what it showed itself also in a piece of absurd extravagance against which M. Olier inveighed with terrible severity. "I think sometimes," he said one day, "of those women who spend so much time in adjusting their beautiful hair. Were I to open their tomb three months after their decease, and take them by this same hair of theirs, on which they have expended so much care, their skull would come off together with their locks.* And then I should say to myself, This is the head that was so full of vanity, this is the woman so proud and haughty, who, as Isaias described her, walked with head erect and a gait so dainty and so grand.† This is the imposture, the lying pretence, the vain and empty show, the cheating falsehood, which deceived the world and deceived your own self. May be, that brain on which you prided yourself will be found half adhering to the skull: and this is what has become of all your boasted cleverness, that accursed instrument of vanity, which you employed to attract minds and hearts to yourself, turning them away and estranging them from God! O sacrilegious robbery, O insolent self-love, O incredible audacity, to dare to turn the creature away from its Maker, in order to attract it to yourself! O God, all created things ought to combine to promote Thy glory, and yet, by the abuse which is made of them, they serve only to diminish it. Every one endeavours to become the centre of her surroundings, and that which was made only for Thee she appropriates to herself. O faces fraught with sorcery, O polluting beauties, O poison-breathing charms, you destroy those whom you ought to save; instead of leading them to their Author, you keep them for yourselves, and, instead of adorers of the true God, you make them your idolaters!"

* Strange to say, a specimen of this elaborately constructed headgear is still extant; and, stranger still, it is supplied by M. Olier's sister, Marie. In the crypt of Notre Dame de Lorette at Issy may still be seen the mortal remains of this lady, now consisting only of bones and hair. This hair, remarkable for its state of perfect preservation, is plaited with an artistic symmetry of which at the present day we have scarcely an idea. It is divided into two long tresses descending to the feet, and to these are joined other shorter tresses, all which are interlaced with a precision and a regularity such as are only to be seen in the most delicately woven tissues.

† Isaias iii. 16.

Immodesty of dress was one of the crying evils of the day, and preachers and confessors had scarcely ventured to insist upon its sinfulness on account of the high position of the ladies who were guilty of it, and who excused themselves on the plea that they were but conforming to the fashion of the time and to the social necessities of their rank and condition. The scandal was not confined to women of quality but extended to all classes, and M. Olier set himself to repair it with all the energies of his soul. Groaning in spirit over the outrages done to Christian modesty, he offered himself as a victim to appease the wrath of God, and punished himself by redoubled austerities for the sins of his people. At the same time he boldly denounced the practice from the pulpit, insisting on its criminality, and, in accents at once terrible and pathetic, bidding his hearers remember how He who was Purity Itself and Very God of Very God had, in expiation of such offences, suffered the ignominy of being stripped of His garments and scourged at the pillar.

With the same object he endeavoured also to instil into the hearts of his people a special devotion to their guardian-angels, who, he reminded them, were ever present at their side, and, being thus the witnesses of their immodesties,* were constrained to become the accusers before God of those whom they were commissioned to watch over and protect. Accordingly, he caused the feast of the angel-guardians, which he had himself for some time observed, to be publicly celebrated at St. Sulpice with more than ordinary solemnity, the first such occasion being Tuesday, the 1st of October,† 1647.

In his sermons he would speak of any acts of irreverence which came under his cognisance, and would himself move through the congregation to see that proper decorum was observed. Ladies of quality at that day—as at this—had an absurd custom of wearing long trains, and they appeared with them at church. M. Olier set himself against the abuse with so resolute a zeal that he succeeded in entirely abolishing it. He directed his priests to refuse communion to any who came unbecomingly attired; and, observing one day a fine lady approaching to make her offering of blessed bread (as was usual on great festivals) immodestly dressed, and attended

* Comp. 1 Cor. xi. 10.

† The feast of the guardian-angels was not of obligation previously to the decree of Clement X., who ordered it to be kept on October 2nd. In M. Olier's time it was observed, as an act of voluntary devotion, on the first free day after September 29th, which in the parish of St. Sulpice was usually October 1st.

by a footman, he rebuked her before all the people, and refused to accept her offering or allow her to approach the sanctuary. Unless, however, it was a case of open scandal he was careful to make his corrections in private, and never unnecessarily drew attention to the offenders. Sometimes his reproof was conveyed in the shape of a delicate hint. Perceiving one day, at a conference he was giving to the members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, one of the Queen's maids of honour whose dress ill accorded with strict rules of propriety, he quietly sent her a pin, with a request that she would use it to fasten the scarf she had on her neck. The young lady received the admonition in the spirit in which it was given, and complied with a simplicity no less edifying than was the zeal of her pastor. M. Olier had the more reason to administer a rebuke on this occasion as the Queen had given express directions that ladies who attended receptions at Court should appear in high dresses; and accordingly he felt that the lady in question was guilty of an act of indecorum in the House of God which she would not have ventured upon in the presence of her royal mistress.

God, it would seem, in order to inspire the faithful with a deeper veneration for His servant, and thus to render him more powerful for good, was pleased at times to bless his ministrations with extraordinary graces, which bore all the appearance of being miraculous, as the following incident will show. He was called one day to comfort an afflicted mother, whose daughter had just died. After suggesting some topics of consolation, he went to see the girl, whom he found lying on a bed without any signs of life. For awhile he stood motionless, with his eyes fixed upon her, powerless to speak or to stir. All this time, he says, he felt a virtue go out from him and diffuse itself over the corpse-like form; and then he heard these words thrice uttered: "*It is life.*" "I knew not," he writes, "what this influence was, unless it proceeded from Jesus Christ dwelling in me; it came purely from Him, and I had no more part in it than have the sacred species in the operations of Jesus Christ residing within them. After this, the girl recovered her health, and has been well ever since, thanks be to God! The matter was not made known, but the parents declare that it was the prayers of this sinner which restored her to life." Far, however, from making the circumstance a subject of self-complacency, M. Olier did but regard it as an additional motive for confessing his own misery and nothingness. "It makes me see," he says, "what little share the ministers of

Christ have in the operations of His goodness and power. He effects the holiest results by means of men who in themselves are often most imperfect and impure, and waits not for their aid or even their desire. It is like what happened to the Humanity of our Lord in the case of the woman whom He healed of an issue of blood. His Humanity felt the Divine Person of the Word operating through It and communicating His virtue to that sufferer. God, by a movement which had its source in Himself, was pleased to produce this operation in the Humanity of His Son, although that Humanity had not interiorly solicited it. Thus we see, by a sort of analogy, how He works in His Church through His ministers and yet without them."

One of the most remarkable among M. Olier's spiritual daughters was Mme. de Rantzau, wife of the celebrated marshal of that name. Both were natives of Holstein, and had been Lutherans in religion. She was a very active partisan of her sect, and her husband, looking upon her as a mere child, for she was then only in her nineteenth year, amused himself by pressing her with Catholic arguments, which she in her turn was most earnest in refuting. At length she began to feel the real force of what he said, but for two years she combated her doubts, until she was led to consult the Curé of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, when, after a fortnight's prayer and fasting, she obtained the light she needed, and was received into the bosom of the Church. Her husband at the time was absent with the army, and on his return laboured to reason her out of her childish folly, for such he deemed it. Soon, however, discovering that she had acted, not from ignorance, but from real and deep conviction, he bade her live as a true and sincere Catholic, for that he was satisfied of her prudence and good faith. Mme. de Rantzau redoubled her prayers and her penances for her husband's conversion, and at length had the happiness of seeing the desire of her heart fulfilled. At the siege of Bourbourg he fell, as he supposed, mortally wounded, and immediately sent for a priest, and begged to be reconciled to the Church. He recovered, however, from his wound, and made open profession of the faith until the day of his death. Upon her conversion Mme. de Rantzau had applied for spiritual guidance to M. Olier, who placed her under the care of an experienced director. This ecclesiastic was in the habit of hearing her confession in one of the side chapels, but, finding him one day seated in a more public part of the church, she sent her page with a request that he would come to her at the

usual place. He replied that, if she wished to make her confession, she must come to him. This accordingly she did, and, with the help of her servant, passed before the other penitents, and stationed herself close to the confessional. When she had finished her confession, the priest rebuked her for her arrogance in taking precedence of those who were patiently awaiting their turn, and bade her observe more humility for the future. She went away in tears, but, far from taking offence at the correction she had received, she made a practice ever after of moving along upon her knees behind the others and, although she had a cushion with her on which she appeared to rest, she scrupulously abstained from using it, and knelt upon the ground. She made an hour's mental prayer every day, and by the advice of her director never mixed in any of the gay society of the capital, except at her husband's express desire, but devoted herself to the instruction of her servants, the greater part of whom were Lutherans; and with such success, that in less than two years sixty * of them had abjured their errors. She was, indeed, endued with a peculiar grace for the conversion of Protestants, and, with the assistance of Mme. de Treuille, the wife of a captain of musketeers, and Mme. de la Rochejacquelein, was instrumental in bringing great numbers to the faith. At her husband's death she entered a house of the Annonciades Célestes,† being attracted to it by the strictness of the enclosure; but by a special dispensation of the Pope, who was unwilling that the gift she possessed should remain hidden and unemployed, she was allowed to converse with any German Protestants who desired to see her. After spending ten years in the house at Paris she founded a convent of her Order at Hildesheim, where she died, in the strict observance of her rule, at the age of eighty.

Of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon mention has been already made, and indeed her virtues and her charities are too well known to need description. M. du Ferrier, however, relates a little incident which, better perhaps than any elaborate eulogy, will give a true idea of her

* It was the custom at that day for persons of rank to retain a large number of servants. It is related of Mme. de la Plesse, widow of the Marquis de Laval, that she had as many as a hundred attendants, and that she allowed none of them to be idle, employing nearly all in her extensive works of charity.

† There were several Orders designated by the name of Annonciades, all established in honour of the mystery of the Annunciation, or the Incarnation. The third, that of the Annonciades Célestes, or Filles Bleues, was founded by a pious widow of Genoa, named Maria-Vittoria Fornaro, who died in 1617. It was an Order of great austerity, and the nuns were strictly enclosed.

fervent piety. "One night," he writes, "I went into the church of St. Sulpice, after taking my repast at half-past eleven o'clock, as was my custom. I was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, when I heard the door of the church open; but I took no notice, knowing that in so large a parish it was often necessary to administer the sacraments to the sick at night. Soon afterwards some one came and knelt down very gently behind me. When I had finished my prayers, I rose from my knees, and found that it was the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, all alone. I expressed my surprise at seeing her there at such an hour, for it was now one o'clock, and asked her the reason. She told me that she had been engaged all day, and that, being on her way back from the Palais Royal (where the Court then was), she wished to make her prayer, not having found time for it during the day; and that, as she would be more retired and collected in the church than at home, she had begged the ringer to open the door for her. I admired her piety, and withdrew, leaving her at her devotions." We might search in vain for an incident like this among all the numerous memoirs from which modern readers take their only idea of the Paris of that day; yet what a glimpse does it give us into the interior of that hidden world of sanctity which underlay the gay and vicious surface of Parisian society!

M. Olier never ceased to combat with all his strength a maxim then, as now, very prevalent even among professedly religious people, that a life of perfection is only for priests, or such as are bound by vows. He regarded it as one of the most cunning devices of the devil to ensnare and destroy men's souls, and we have seen how he strove to defeat his malice by the numerous confraternities and associations which he established for persons living in the world. He possessed, however, a wonderful power of discrimination in the matter of vocations; and, as he judged that one person ought to marry, and another to enter religion, so he would counsel a third to lead a life of celibacy in the world. One instance of the last kind caused a great sensation at the time. The Marquis de Portes, maternal uncle of the Duc de Montmorency who was beheaded in the reign of Louis XIII., died, leaving an only daughter, Marie-Félice de Budos. When she was but ten years of age she made a vow of perpetual virginity; and her mother, who had taken as her second husband the Duc de Saint-Simon, when she learned the fact, wished to make her go into a convent, in the hope that she would leave to her the disposition of her property. Finding, however, that she was

determined to continue in the world, and devote herself to the service of the poor, she treated the matter as a mere girlish fancy, and, on her daughter attaining her sixteenth year, endeavoured, with the aid of certain doctors of theology, whom she called together for the purpose, to induce her to look upon her vow as null and void. The Marquise de Portes, however, remained firm in her resolution, and her mother thought to bring her to submission by keeping her strictly confined to the house. The Duchesse de Montmorency, Marie-Félice des Ursins, who had retired to the Convent of the Visitation at Moulins, feeling herself bound in her quality of cousin as well as of godmother to protect her young relative against so unjust a persecution, entreated M. Olier to lend his assistance. He succeeded in communicating by letter with Mlle. de Portes, in spite of the vigilance with which she was guarded, and recommended to her the course she should pursue. She followed his advice, and the result was a decisive victory. Her mother called in the aid of another conclave of doctors, but scarcely had they taken their seats, and begun gravely to discuss the question whether a vow taken at so early an age was not void in itself, from default of a sufficient intention, when Mlle. de Portes, throwing herself on her knees before them all, uttered these words with a loud voice: "O my God, if the vow which I made be not binding on me by reason of the tender age at which I made it, I renew it this day for my whole life." An act so unexpected broke up the conference, and the doctors at once retired, declaring there was no longer any room for doubt. The Duchesse de Saint-Simon now protested that she would never see her daughter again, and Mlle. de Portes accordingly repaired to the Convent of the Visitation. Perceiving, however, that she had no vocation for a religious life, but that God had inspired her from her earliest years with a desire to consecrate herself to His service in the relief of the poor and the conversion of heretics, M. Olier decided that she ought to follow the attractions of Divine grace, and remain in the world. She therefore quitted Moulins, and went to labour in the Cévennes, where her estates lay; there she also founded a Convent of the Visitation, to which she was in the habit of retiring whenever she needed a calm retreat from the harassing toils to which she had devoted her life. She died in 1702.

Never did man show a more sincere respect for the great than did M. Olier, and never was man more zealous that the great should show honour to God. In all the ceremonies of the Church, such

as the adoration of the Cross, the distribution of blessed candles or palms, he made it a rule that the clergy should take precedence of the laity, however exalted their rank, even though they were princes of the blood. This rule was cheerfully accepted by all, and by none more readily than by the highest in station. Thus, one day that the Duc d'Orléans was assisting at Vespers, M. Olier, for some reason or other, omitted to incense him with the thurible, as was customary. But, anxious to repair the neglect, he went to the house of the Duke for the purpose of tendering his apologies. Scarcely, however, had he opened his lips when the Duke, with an expression of the utmost deference, said, "From you, Monsieur, no apology is ever needed;" and he ordered a sum of money to be given to him for the relief of the poor. Hereafter we shall see all that the servant of God did to obtain the conversion of this powerful nobleman and the success which attended his efforts.

It will be remembered that among M. Olier's opponents none had been more active than the Prince Henri de Condé. The only effect which this injurious conduct had upon the servant of God was to make him pray, and urge the Princess to pray, all the more fervently for his conversion. These prayers were heard; for, on being attacked by the illness of which he died, the Prince sent for M. Olier and testified to him in the most earnest manner his sorrow for all the disorders of his life and, among them, for the hostility he had manifested towards himself on his taking charge of the parish; a course which he declared he had long deeply regretted. The signs of penitence which he displayed were so indubitable that no one could question the sincerity of his conversion. The Prince at the same time expressed his contrition for the part he had played in the preceding reign, when he leagued himself with the Huguenots and took up arms against his sovereign. Moreover, with a prescient eye to what was soon to happen, he commissioned M. Olier and others, including the Apostolic Nuncio, M. Bagni, and M. de Pons de la Grange, Curé of St. Jacques du Haut Pas, to warn the Queen Regent against the new sect, then beginning to form itself at Port Royal, which, unless it were strenously opposed and repressed, would one day endanger the security of the throne. The Prince died on the 26th of December, 1646.

Among the letters of M. Olier which have been preserved are many addressed to ladies of the highest rank; and, as an illustration of the sentiments with which he sought to inspire them, we will here

quote some of the instructions he gave to the Princesse de Condé, who was one of his penitents. In the first letter, which was written at her desire, immediately after her husband's death, he prescribes the spirit with which she ought to spend her time of mourning, and conform herself to the ceremonial which Court etiquette imposed upon her. "You have survived," he wrote, "him who was the half of yourself, and whose sins ought therefore to affect you like your own, seeing you were one with him through the holy state of matrimony. Moreover, the wives of princes are confined for forty days to their chamber, where no light is allowed to enter save that of torches; the object of which is to show the closeness of the union subsisting between the dead husband and the living wife, who, enclosed, as it were, in the same tomb with him, sighs and weeps in the place of him who can no longer lament for his sins. For the design of God in this matter of mourning, which from the church passes into the houses of the faithful, is to oblige Christians to practise penance. Hence, Madame, those trappings of woe in which you are enveloped and which are spread around you, are to teach you that you ought to weep for the disorders of those who have gone before you, and who, having been powerful in the world, have left behind them long trains of afflictions and great obligations to do penance."

The Princess also begged M. Olier to draw up a rule of life for her, and he sent her a sort of familiar treatise on the right use to be made of worldly grandeur. "In creating man," he said, "God designed to represent in him an image of His own greatness; and, after man fell from his high estate by sin, God still preserved a vestige of his original splendour in the persons of the great. Jesus Christ, who came to restore all things, sanctified both conditions: that of lowliness, which is common to the larger portion of men, by His own life of poverty and suffering, and that of greatness by His life of glory, inasmuch as since His Resurrection He is the King of the princes and lords of earth. I am not of the opinion of those who, mistaking the meaning of our Lord's words, affirm that the condition of the great is an abomination before God. True it is that the abuse of a state so august and sacred becomes an abomination in the sight of God when men presume to appropriate to themselves the honour and glory with which they are surrounded, and would make themselves pass for gods on the earth. But, looking at greatness in itself, and, above all, as it has been repaired in

Jesus Christ, I find nothing more beautiful, more lovely, or more holy; for, if Christians ought to behold in the great the glory and the royalty of Jesus Christ, and to honour Him in their persons, so the great ought to be clothed with holiness, benignity, mercifulness, and all the perfections of God, whose majesty they represent by their state. Remember then, Madame, that you are upon earth a sharer in the Divinity, who is pleased to reside in you, not only to manifest His majesty before the eyes of men, but to receive their homage and load them with His benefits. I beseech you, therefore, to receive nothing save in the name of God, and for God, whose representative you are; and to take care that all the respect that is paid you stop not at yourself, but pass on to Him. Do the same also when you give. Do not desire that men should have regard to you, but that God alone be acknowledged as the source of your gifts.

"When you see yourself surrounded by your Court, remember that in this you ought to be the image of God surrounded by His angels and His saints. Say often to God, 'It is for Thee, O Lord, and for what I have received from Thee, that this assemblage pays me honour; and, as I cannot take aught thereof to myself without robbery, let this whole court render homage to Thy greatness, and Thy poor creature be annihilated before Thee.' Your retinue ought to be to you the image of the majesty of the glory of God. You must desire it in God and for God, and not in yourself and for vanity. If you pay a visit to the King or Queen, do so with the intention of the Principalities of Heaven, who render the homage of their greatness to the majesty of God and acknowledge Him as their sovereign. If you visit a person of rank inferior to your own, honour in him a participation of the greatness of God, who desires to be honoured in him; and, when you visit those who are of still lower degree, go with the disposition of God Himself visiting His lowly ones, condescending with kindness, sweetness, and charity, in order to assist and console them and do them a service. At the same time receive on God's behalf the honour they show you, so that, referring to Him what they may not think of giving Him, you may do your own duty and theirs together."

His addresses to the rich and great were severe and uncompromising in their character, but tempered always with the purest Christian principles. To cure them of their pride and teach them a lesson of self-abasement, he showed them how their very grandeur

ought to be a subject of humiliation to them, seeing how dependent they were for their comfort and well-being on a multitude of others who ministered to their necessities and without whose assistance their life would be miserable; how the higher and grander they were the more numerous were their wants and the more absolute their dependency: in short, what helpless creatures they were, as compared with the poor and lowly, who move about so freely without carriages and horses and troops of servants in attendance, and, what is more, do not feel the need of them. "O great one of this world, so miserable in thy grandeur," he exclaimed, "in what dost thou glory? What hast thou to be proud of? Consider what thou art in the body; consider on how many things thou dependest in order to be perfectly satisfied and contented. When anything occurs to annoy thee, as happens every day, humble thyself, and say, 'God has subjected me to this shameful dependency to make me know what I am and what I should be if left to myself.' Trouble not thyself thereat, if thou be a Christian, but say within thyself, 'I am a sinner, and I deserve to lose every comfort I enjoy. Ah, well, it is one of my limbs which is paralysed and does not perform its functions. I will not amputate it, I will have pity on it, I will try to heal and to strengthen it, as a thing of my own, a part of myself.'

"If this great lord sometimes finds that something is wanting to his delicate cravings, in eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, let him humble himself at seeing how dependent he is for his contentment on so many miserable trifles. O fragile peace, which can be disturbed by such paltry matters! O wretched felicity, which can be so easily troubled; felicity which is never solid and entire, because it needs the concurrence of so many creatures; creatures, too, so weak, so imperfect, so full of defects! *Glorietur dives in humilitate sua.**

"O my Lord Jesus, in Thy spirit of sanctity, Thou didst not will to be dependent on many things; Thou wast pleased to be Thine own servant, and to dispense with the aid of many creatures. In this Thou wast poor in the eyes of the world, but, in its blindness, it did not see that this very thing was a sign of Thy wealth and Thy independence."

Neither did the servant of God neglect to instruct the *seigneurs* of his parish in their duties towards those who tilled or farmed the lands on their domains. He warned them that, as lords of the soil,

* "Let the rich man glory in his being low." St. James i. 9, 10.

they were under strict obligation to see that the peasants on their estates received a competent remuneration for their labours, and that the occupiers enjoyed an equitable share in the profits of their farms; and further, he insisted that they were bound to supply the religious necessities of their people, attend personally to their spiritual welfare, set them a good example in their own practice, and be at pains to ascertain that they were well instructed in all that was essential to their salvation.

Touched by these exhortations, some ladies of the Faubourg, knowing how difficult Mme. de Villeneuve had found it to provide subsistence for her school-teachers of the Congregation of the Cross, engaged to assist her in sending them on a kind of mission among the women and girls of their domains, with the object of instructing them in the truths of religion, teaching them how to make a good confession, and, generally, how to sanctify their lives by the observance of all the rules of piety and virtue. Other ladies, again, like the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, charged themselves with the expense of employing bands of missionary priests to evangelize the parishes dependent upon them.

In the Life of M. de Renty are given ample details respecting his efforts in providing and promoting missions among the people in his domains; here it will be sufficient to cite a portion of a letter which he addressed to M. Olier while the celebrated Père Eudes was preaching in his *seigneurie* of Citry. It is dated June 16th, 1642. "The Reverend Père Eudes," he writes, "is labouring here with a benediction which passes belief. His wonderful gift of expounding the truths of salvation, and manifesting the love of God for us in Christ Jesus and the terrible nature of sin, has stirred men's hearts so profoundly that the confessors are overwhelmed with their labours. Sinners ask for penance with tears, they make restitution, they are reconciled to their enemies, and loudly protest that they would rather die than sin. His sermons are thunder-claps, which allow consciences no rest until they have divulged their most secret sins; so that the confessors are employed rather in consoling than exciting to repentance. At the first sermon on the opening day of the mission, which was Whitsunday, one of the hearers on leaving the church scoffed at the preaching, and turned the mission into ridicule in order to keep others away, but during the night he found himself so powerfully moved and so completely changed that in the morning he came to one of the missioners, declared his desire to amend his life, and

thereupon went to confession. A man of Château-Thierri, a town twelve miles off, said yesterday that a person who was leading a bad life returned from Citry determined to break off an immoral connection he had formed and openly to manifest his repentance and conversion. In short, the hearts of the people are softened and deeply affected with the knowledge of their God and Saviour and of what He would have them to do. They readily engage to continue the devotions and other Christian exercises which have been taught them. Besides these general results, such as leaving off cursing and swearing and practising prayer both in public and with their families, I might tell you many noteworthy particulars. I have written this simply that you may bless our Lord for having at length vouchsafed, by means of this mission, to vanquish the demon, defeat all his efforts, and destroy the mighty empire which he possessed in these parts." We, in our turn, have cited this letter in order to show the powerful engines which M. Olier had set to work in the persons of the energetic men whom his zeal had enlisted in the service of God.

The Marquis de Fénelon, to whom no higher meed of praise could be rendered than by saying that he was a worthy rival of M. de Renty in his works of charity and mercy, determined to establish a community of missioners in his *seigneurie* of Magnac, a little village of La Marche, in the diocese of Limoges, whose business it should be to labour for the spiritual good of the inhabitants. M. Olier warmly encouraged the undertaking, and commissioned some of his ecclesiastics to assist at its commencement, removing them for the purpose from Clermont-Lodève, to which place they had been sent some years previously at the request of the Bishop, M. Plantavit de la Pause. In his letter to M. Couderc, their superior, he says, "Let us abandon ourselves to God's appointments; let us adore His divine providence and His holy dispensations; let us not think of ourselves, nor of the plans of our own devising. Let us give ourselves without reserve to the Holy Spirit, who conducted the Apostles by His wisdom and not by their own. '*Ubi erat impetus Spiritus, illuc gradiebantur; nec revertebantur cum incederent.*'* The establishment of a community at Magnac will be of very great advantage to that vast and important diocese. We must follow the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord and His conduct in regard to His disciples, whom He sent from place to place to produce fruits whose virtue should be diffused

* "Whither the impulse of the Spirit was to go, thither they went; and they turned not when they went." Ezech. i. 12.

and maintained in the souls of men : *In hoc vocati estis, ut fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat.*" * So unsparing was the zeal with which the missioners devoted themselves to the work that M. Olier, on receiving a report of their labours, wrote to M. Couderc and begged him to moderate his ardour, and that of his brethren, lest their health should suffer. He advised him to give them a spiritual retreat, in order at once to renovate their interior and obtain the refreshment which they so imperatively needed. The devil (he wrote) would desire nothing better than to see the young associates enfeeble their powers by over-exertion : it is a temptation (he added) to which the young are especially subject. After a while the Sulpicians withdrew, and the work was transferred to other labourers. The Marquis endowed the community with adequate funds for its subsistence, and it became, in fact, the Petit Séminaire of Magnac. In 1679 it was united to the Sulpician Seminary of Limoges, which subsisted down to the Revolution.

* "To this have you been called, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Comp. St. John xv. 16.

CHAPTER IX.

M. OLIER'S RELATIONS WITH CHARLES II.

WE are now approaching a subject which is of special interest to English Catholics, and respecting which the Abbé Faillon furnishes details which, so far as we are aware, were previously unknown. We allude to the relations into which M. Olier was brought with one for whom, with all his faults and vices, we cannot but feel a profound compassion, our own King Charles II. The religious state of England had long been the subject of M. Olier's most earnest solicitude. We learn from his *Mémoires* that as far back as 1642, when he was laying the foundations of his society at Vaugirard, he had been moved to offer himself to God as a victim for the salvation of our country. This took place after recitation of the Divine Office on the 12th of March, the feast of St. Gregory the Great, and he had begged his associates to make their communion on that day instead of Thursday, as was their habit, and to pray for the conversion of England, where, as he told them, he had heard within the last few days that several priests and others had just suffered martyrdom. From that time he had never ceased imploring the mercy of God for "this our miserable country," not only with fervent supplications, but with bodily mortifications of the most rigorous kind. The desire of his heart, as M. de Bretonvilliers testifies, would have been to join the heroic band of priests who were labouring for the restoration of England to Catholic unity, if the Will of God had so permitted, although he knew that he would thereby be exposing himself to the peril of a most frightful and ignominious death; and, indeed, we find him saying in one of his letters, "If I dared to aspire after something of that solid glory which is found in the service of our Divine Master by giving one's life and shedding one's blood for Him, I should look to England as the prime object of my hopes."* No sooner, therefore,

* *Lettres Spirituelles*, lvi.

did he learn that the royal exile had taken up his abode in Paris than he sought an opportunity of holding personal communication with him. For this opportunity, it would appear, he was indebted to the Abbé d'Aubigny, whose own history is sufficiently remarkable to deserve particular mention in these pages.

Louis Stuart had inherited, in right of his father, Edmund Duke of Lennox, the domain of Aubigny in Berry, which in 1422 had been conferred by Charles VII. on John Stuart and his descendants in recompense for services rendered to the Crown of France. When still but five years of age, he had been taken to that country, and put to school at Port-Royal with nineteen other children of noble birth. He had consequently the happiness of being brought up in the true faith, and at an early age, having an attraction to the service of the altar, he was admitted to the tonsure. Unfortunately, when his school days were over, he was committed to the tutelage of two divines who, instead of instructing him in the obligations of his state, sought only to imbue his mind with their own erroneous views on the subject of grace; in which, however, he took no sort of interest, except so far as they afforded him matter of argumentative discussion. But, through the mercy of God, he was brought, as if by accident, into communication with St. Sulpice. The Princesse Anne de Gonzague, daughter of the Duc de Nevers et de Mantoue and sister of the Queen of Poland, who had made herself notorious by the levity of her behaviour, was sought in marriage by Edward, Prince Palatine of the Rhine,* who in consequence of family misfortunes had taken refuge in France. A Protestant by birth, he was led by the Abbé d'Aubigny, who was a relative of his, to embrace the Catholic faith. The marriage was disliked by the Princes de Lorraine, who were not of the blood royal, because his rank would entitle him to take precedency of them at Court, and, to prevent any obstacle being thrown in the way, the Abbé undertook to obtain the consent of the Queen Regent; which, indeed, he did, but in such a manner that her Majesty supposed he was only speaking in jest. The marriage, accordingly, was duly solemnized in the Church of St. Sulpice, both parties being parishioners, but the Queen Regent was no sooner informed of the fact than she made a formal protest before the Parliament of Paris against an alliance which she declared her god-daughter had contracted without her consent, and that, too, with one who was both a foreigner and (as she believed) a Protestant; and

* Edouard de Bavière was the son of the Elector Frederic V., King of Bohemia. His mother was Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I.

the Prince was thereupon ordered to quit the kingdom without delay. This was on the 30th of April, 1645.

Deeply grieved at what had happened, and fearful lest the Prince, who was but one-and-twenty, should lapse into Protestantism if he rejoined his mother, who was herself an ardent Calvinist, the Abbé besought the priests of St. Sulpice to use their influence with the Regent in his relative's behalf. They, in turn, addressed themselves to St. Vincent de Paul, who was held in high consideration by Anne of Austria, and through his mediation the affair was satisfactorily concluded. A courier despatched to Dieppe arrived just in time to prevent the young Prince from embarking for Holland, and, after a residence of six months at Daubigny, he was graciously received at Court together with his bride. Grateful for their good offices, the Princess sent the Abbé to the priests of St. Sulpice to tender them her thanks and to enquire in what way she could testify her recognition of their services. The reply they made was in full accordance with that holy liberty which they were wont to use in regard to the great ones of the parish. It was to this effect—that the Princess could not oblige them more, or cause them greater joy, than by repairing the disorders of her past life by making a general confession, which would draw down a blessing upon herself and her whole house. The lady took the monition in good part, and, after a week's devout preparation, made her confession in the church of Notre Dame des Vertus, at Aubervilliers, near Paris, which was visited every year in pilgrimage by the parishioners of St. Sulpice. She repaired thither on foot in a spirit of penance, accompanied only by the Abbé d'Aubigny. For M. Olier personally the Princess ever retained the greatest veneration, but, unhappily, she did not adhere to her good resolutions, for on the death of her husband she fell back into her former courses. In 1672, however, she completely changed the tenor of her life. Quitting the Court, she secluded herself in her *hôtel*, and, with her whole household, gave herself up to exercises of piety and good works. She observed regular hours of prayer, with which nothing was allowed to interfere; her hands were employed in working for the church or for the poor; and in the times of distress which followed her charity knew no bounds: she parted with every superfluity, and in all things practised an economy which was nigh to the strictest poverty.*

* At her death the Princess bequeathed a relic of the true Cross to the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés, which is still preserved, under the name of the Palatine Cross, in the treasury of Notre Dame in Paris.

It was a happy circumstance for the Abbé d'Aubigny that he was brought into close relations with the Community of St. Sulpice. Henceforth his desire was to lead the life of a true cleric, and to this end he placed himself under the direction of one of the Sulpician priests, his choice falling, in the first instance, on M. du Ferrier, who makes honourable mention of him in his *Mémoires*. When the divines to whom allusion has been made learned whom he had chosen as his director they were not a little chagrined, and said to him, "You will be lucky if, in cutting off your flowing locks, he does not crop your ears as well." To which the Abbé replied, "If he bids me shave my head as close as a choir-boy's, I shall do it without a moment's regret;" and, in fact, he very soon discarded the fashions of the Court and assumed, not only the garb, but the mien of a true ecclesiastic. At the same time, by the advice of his director, he ceased from taking part in the disputations then in vogue, and devoted himself to the diligent study of Holy Scripture and the practice of mental prayer. Although he held the Abbey of Hautefontaine *in commendam*, he had only received the tonsure and two of the minor orders. He now set himself earnestly to redeem the time he had lost and, after several years' preparation, received the other two minor orders and the subdiaconate on December 21st, 1652, at the hands of a prelate so distinguished in our English Catholic annals, the Right Reverend Richard Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon. On the Sunday following, in virtue of a special dispensation granted by the Pope, the same prelate conferred on him the diaconate; and on the feast of St. Stephen he was raised to the priesthood. From that moment he regarded himself as entirely set apart for the service of God, and, in order to devote all his time and energies to his sacred duties, he exchanged the abbacy of Hautefontaine for a canonry at Notre Dame, in which new dignity he was formally installed on the 5th of November, 1653. He took up his residence in the cloister of the metropolitan church, and became a model to his brethren in modesty, religiousness, and assiduous attendance in choir, never omitting being present at all the canonical hours, both by day and by night: at the first stroke of the bell summoning him to the Divine Office he quitted whatever company he might happen to be in, without regard to the rank or condition of those with whom he was conversing, who, indeed, only honoured him the more for his conscientious strictness. In fine, so perfectly did he practise all the virtues of a good and holy priest that M.

du Ferrier does not scruple to class "the singular piety of M. d'Aubigny among the most notable fruits which St. Sulpice had produced."

Thus highly esteemed at Court, and with the royal blood of Scotland flowing in his veins, it was only natural that the Abbé d'Aubigny should be the person through whom the Curé of St. Sulpice would seek an introduction to the Stuart King, especially as it was well known that Charles regarded his kinsman with sentiments of peculiar confidence and affection. In the History of his own Times Burnet avers that no one had more influence with the King, and that, no doubt, he was greatly influential in leading him to Catholicism.* At the Restoration the Abbé went to England, and in 1662 became Almoner to the Queen. It was Charles's ardent desire that his kinsman should be created a Cardinal, and he was indefatigable in his endeavours to bring it about, hoping thereby to prepare the way for the re-union of his kingdom with the Apostolic See. In 1665 the Abbé returned to France with the intention of resigning his canonry and devoting himself solely to the interests of the Church in this country, when he was seized with his last illness, and died at Paris on the 11th of November, in the same year, at the age of forty-six. A few hours before his decease, a courier arrived from Rome bringing him a Cardinal's hat. His death was a disaster to Charles and to the Catholic cause in England.

To one so easy-natured as Charles access was at no time difficult, and M. Olier found a ready way to his confidence by his liberality in providing for the necessities of his followers, many of whom were destitute of all means of subsistence. Charles took evident pleasure in his conversation, but on the one subject to which the man of God desired to lead his thoughts he was for a time quite unapproachable. The young King was all the less disposed to listen to his counsels because the Pope, to whom he had written to beg his aid in recovering possession of his kingdom, seeing that he evinced no intention of returning to the faith of his ancestors, or engaging to mitigate the rigours of the persecution under which his Catholic subjects were groaning, had made him no reply. His resentment, however, at length began to yield under the sweet influences which a soul filled with the peace of God cannot fail to exert even on the most obdurate, and the conversations he held with M. Olier assumed more and

* Vol. i. pp. 79, 149. Burnet speaks of him in disparaging terms; but the Bishop, we know, is not to be trusted where his religious prejudices are concerned.

more the character of conferences on the tenets of the Catholic religion. The servant of God, as need not be said, relied less on argument than on prayer, and he called in other devout persons to his aid. "I earnestly beseech all our brethren," he wrote to his priests at Le Puy, "to recommend to our Lord, in our Blessed Mother, the affair of the King of England, with which Providence has again charged me. He now shows himself disposed to have his religious difficulties removed; yesterday I had the satisfaction of speaking to him. So far as I can urge one thing upon all in common and on each in particular, I do so in this matter. Some prayers, some petitions, and intentions at Mass daily I must have, for they are absolutely needed in order to obtain so great a boon. I leave all to the love which you have for Jesus, and for Mary, who once had that kingdom for her dowry. I say no more."

That M. Olier's expositions of the Catholic faith produced a most powerful impression on the mind of Charles, and that the impression, though overlaid for a time, was a lasting one, there can be no doubt. The King himself is known to have declared to one of his friends that, although many distinguished persons had spoken to him on religious matters, from none of them had he derived so much enlightenment as from the Abbé Olier; that he felt his words to be endued with a power quite extraordinary, and that, in short, he had fully satisfied his mind.* Indeed, there has always been a belief among the Sulpicians that, under M. Olier's direction, Charles made a formal abjuration of Protestantism preparatory to being received into the bosom of the Church, and that he transmitted it secretly to the Pope, promising at the same time to make his conversion public on being re-instated in his kingdom. In England no doubt seems to have been entertained on the matter by those who were likely to be best informed. Burnet states positively, in the History of his own

* The Abbé Faillon's authority for this statement is M. de Bretonvilliers, who in his *Mémoires* added these words: "For the present I cannot say more." In the copy of these *Mémoires* which the Abbé first consulted, and which their author had prepared for publication, M. de Bretonvilliers, in order not to compromise Charles in the eyes of his Protestant subjects, had refrained from giving his name, describing him simply as "a great English lord;" and consequently M. Faillon, in the first two editions of his *Life of M. Olier*, had spoken doubtfully on the subject. On referring, however, to the original autograph he found that "the great English lord" in question was the King of England himself, and in the latest edition of his work he has signified the discovery he had made.

Times,* that Charles changed his religion before quitting Paris, although the fact was kept secret from most of his own courtiers. M. Faillon, moreover, gives extracts from letters which the King addressed to Pope Alexander VII., the General of the Jesuits, and others, after the Restoration, in which, while protesting his abhorrence of the Protestant schism and his firm belief in the truth of the Catholic religion, he seeks—not to excuse his delay in being reconciled to the Church, but—to exculpate himself for not making open profession of the faith.

His abjuration is supposed to have been made at Fontainebleau in 1655; and certainly M. Olier must have had valid reasons for believing that the King was sincere, for, with that generous ardour which he ever displayed where the interests of religion were concerned, the servant of God undertook to put 10,000 disciplined soldiers at his disposal, if Charles on his part would engage to re-establish the Catholic religion on gaining possession of his kingdom. Nor shall we consider the proposal as the mere heedless expression of an enthusiastic zeal, when we recollect the extraordinary influence exercised by this holy man over some of the boldest military spirits of his time, inspiring them with the courage to defy the tyranny of public opinion, which regarded the refusal of a challenge as unworthy of a man of honour. Indeed, the very fact that, some years later, the Marquis de Fénelon did actually conduct 400 gentlemen to the defence of Candia against the Turks in the capacity of volunteers shows with what ardour such generous souls would, at the instigation of one whom they so much revered, have embarked in an enterprise the object of which was to restore to England both the hereditary monarchy and the ancient faith. Such an expedition, however, would have been little in consonance with the policy of Cardinal Mazarin; and, besides, Charles himself had very soon changed his mind. The solicitations of divine grace were no longer heeded amidst the vicious indulgences to which he had abandoned himself in the gay city of Paris, and his degradation was completed by renouncing the convictions of his conscience for a political advantage. Yielding to the counsels of the interested advisers by whom he was surrounded, he publicly announced his determination to live and die in the Anglican communion, for which his father had suffered so much. And live, accordingly, he did ostensibly a Protestant while a Catholic in belief and conviction, even consenting to the judicial murder of Catholic priests and others whom he well knew to

* Vol. i. p. 78.

be innocent of the crimes laid to their charge. The Queen, after his death, declared that Charles "never entered her boudoir, where she kept suspended the portraits of the Jesuit Fathers who were martyred in the feigned conspiracy, but he would turn towards them and, kissing their hands, would beg their forgiveness in the most humble manner, and, full of sentiments of repentance, make a most hearty protestation of his fault and of their innocence, concluding by saying that they were in a place where they knew of a truth that he had been forced, and that they would therefore pray to God for him to pardon his crime."* And pray, assuredly, they did, and with marvellous effect, for, by one of those miracles of grace which our merciful God sometimes vouchsafes, as though to show forth His longsuffering for sinners, the King was to die in the faith which, during life, he lacked the courage to profess. For M. Olier his esteem remained unaltered, as was shown when, on hearing of his death, he observed with manifest sorrow that in him he had lost one of the truest friends he had ever possessed.

The following particulars, which have lately come to light, are invested with a pathetic interest. Father Augustine Lawrence, of the Society of Jesus, who was probably attached to the Queen's household, in a letter which he addressed to the Father Assistant of Portugal, then at Rome, and which is dated May 11th, 1685, says, on the testimony of the Queen herself, "Among some articles which were taken from the martyred Fathers [victims of Oates's plot] and carried to the King, there was found a relic of the wood of the true Cross, which his Majesty took; and, though the Queen begged for it, he would not part with it, saying that he wished to keep it for himself, which he did, for after death nothing else was found in the King's pocket except the holy relic and a manuscript, in his own handwriting, proving by the clearest arguments the truth of the Roman Catholic faith." To this extract Brother Foley has appended the following note:—"Echard, *History of England*, vol. iii. p. 732, states that there were two papers found in Charles II.'s strong box, both of which were certainly written by the King himself, as was attested by King James and declared by the Duke of Ormond. These papers contain concise but forcible arguments in favour of Catholicity. A copy is given by Dodd, vol. iii. p. 398."† May it

* *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, by Henry Foley, S.J. Series xii. p. 93.

† Ib. p. 94. These were in all probability the same little treatises which were

not reasonably be conjectured that they contained a summary of the arguments advanced by his saintly instructor during the earlier portion of the King's residence at Paris?

Two noblemen, his fellow-exiles, came under the same salutary influence while staying in that city. Edward Somerset, Marquis of Worcester, went so far as to engage, in a document which was deposited in the Seminary of St. Sulpice, April 22nd, 1650, to maintain a priest at his own private expense in the event of his regaining his patrimonial estates. But unhappily, like his royal master, the world proved too strong for him, and in the day of prosperity he forgot both his engagement and his God. He forgot also to repay a loan of money which M. de Bretonvilliers had made him, and the acknowledgment of which, signed with the Marquis's own hand, might long have been seen,—and perhaps may still be seen,—among the archives of the Community. It was now also that George Digby, Earl of Bristol, professed himself a Catholic, but only to become a scandal to his countrymen by leading a life of cowardly duplicity, and at length publicly renouncing the faith which he had never really in heart embraced.* Such conquests are, indeed, only subjects of pain and grief to the Catholic heart, but even these abortive successes may be taken as testimonies to the power which personal sanctity exercises over even the unworthiest of men; and, assuredly, if the penitence of Charles at the last were sincere and effective, he owed his soul's salvation, under God, to the prayers and unwearied charity of the Curé of St. Sulpice.

What is so remarkable (as M. Faillon observes), is that the fact of M. Olier being instrumental in the King's conversion should have remained so long unknown and unsuspected. But this was only in accordance with God's general dealings with His servant, and with the part assigned to him in the order of Divine Providence. His vocation, as he himself says in his *Mémoires*, was to do great works and not to be known as the author of them. "On this subject," he

instrumental in the conversion of the Earl of Perth. See the *Month*, February, 1884, p. 195.

* "In 1664 De Comminges, the French ambassador, wrote to Louis XIV. that on the last Sunday in January the Comte de Bristol, at Oulmilton, as he calls Wimbledon, in presence of the congregation in the parish church, heartily renounced Popery, and afterwards took the minister and a few others to dine with him." Doran, *Memories of our Great Towns*, p. 383. Burnet says (vol. i. p. 217) that he practised astrology, and had the impertinence to tell the King that he was in danger from his brother.

writes, "our Lord instructed me that we ought to appear as little as possible, that the less we engage the attention of the world the brighter shall we shine throughout eternity, and that the sacrifice of all exterior display is a holocaust most agreeable to God. I see an example of this in our Lord Himself in the Most Holy Sacrament, which ought to serve me as a rule and model in everything. He is the source of every good in the Church, and yet He does not appear. He does everything in secret in the holy tabernacle; He appears less than does a Bishop or an Apostle; and nevertheless it is He who does all. Thus He desires to reign in me, and by me to effect all things with strength and wisdom, but without display, always in secret and hidden from the eyes of the world. It is thus He spoke to me, in His goodness, this very day, relative to a matter which greatly concerned His glory: 'You must be, as it were, the heart of My works, and give life and movement to everything without being perceived. The members of the body must needs show themselves, and yet they are entirely dependent on the heart, which beats unseen.' Thus it is that, without intending it, I feel myself always foremost in all the works of His hands; I have part in everything, I labour in everything, by prayer, by writing, by speech, all which proceed from the Spirit of God, and yet I do not produce and exhibit myself, that by me our Lord may afford a sensible token of the way in which He operates in the Church by means of the Most Holy Sacrament."

Herein, then, we see why this great servant of God remained so long in comparative oblivion, notwithstanding the magnificent services which he rendered, and still continues to render, to the Church; this is why so many ecclesiastical writers have scarcely made allusion to the labours of this holy priest, and by their reticence have thrown a veil over the lustre of his virtues. It was the design of God that, prominent as was M. Olier's position in the world of his day and conspicuous as were the works which he accomplished, his transcendent merits should long remain inadequately recognized. "The founder of St. Sulpice," said M. Tronson, "desired to be hidden, but God will make him manifest in His own time." That time has come.

CHAPTER X.

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF M. OLIER'S PASTORAL ZEAL.

THE Church of St. Sulpice, once all but deserted, was now unable to contain the multitudes which sought admission; so that on extraordinary occasions, when there was a larger concourse than usual, it became necessary to celebrate the parochial offices in the abbey-church of St. Germain. On Sundays and festivals especially the building was so densely crowded that many of the parishioners were unable to reach their places, and permission was given to the Comte de Brienne and other persons of distinction to enter their respective chapels by private doors constructed for the purpose.

We have seen that from his first entrance on his pastoral charge M. Olier had it in contemplation to build a new parish church which should be better proportioned to the extent of the Faubourg, the grandeur of the ceremonial which he desired to see introduced, and the number of ecclesiastics who formed his community. Full of this pious design, he deeply deplored the indifference manifested by the great people of the parish, who constructed splendid mansions for themselves and left the Son of God a dilapidated dwelling devoid of all dignity and beauty. On learning the death of Marie de Médicis, who had expended vast sums on her palace of the Luxembourg, while the House of God was allowed to lie waste, he felt himself penetrated with a desire, as pastor of her soul, to make satisfaction to the Divine Justice for the neglect of which she had been guilty. "If only," he writes, "she had been pleased to bestow on the church the money she had destined for the completion of those wings to her palace which she left unfinished, she would have been able to rebuild it and to put it in a state befitting the worship of God and the needs of the population. How strange that persons should devote so much trouble and incur such enormous expenses to lodge themselves, fleeting creatures of earth and very dunghills

in the sight of God, and never give a thought to the erection of temples in honour of His ineffable Majesty!"

Already, in the December of 1642, he had laid before the wardens his proposal for enlarging the church, and in the following March the proposal was adopted at a general meeting of the parishioners without a dissenting voice; but not without personal humiliations to the pastor himself, who received them in that spirit of self-abasement and submission to the will of God which ever distinguished him. In his *Mémoires* he alludes to the circumstance but does not enter into any particulars. As the proposed building would extend over a portion of the public cemetery, M. Olier offered in exchange half of the garden belonging to the Community. The celebrated architect, Christophe Gamard, was directed to draw up the plans, and everything seemed to augur a speedy success, particularly as a proportion of the stone for the foundations was obtained gratuitously from the Crown through the good offices of the Queen Regent, but it was not until the excitement consequent on the attempt to expel M. Olier from the parish had subsided that the affair was definitively resumed. On the feast of the Assumption, 1645, he convened a meeting of the wardens, at which M. Gamard exhibited the plan of the building which M. Olier designed to erect, and which was three times larger than the existing structure.

Hopeless as it might appear that so vast a design should ever be realized, he was not deterred by any consideration of the difficulties to be encountered in raising the necessary funds; and, instead of regulating the cost of the building by the amount already collected, he fixed his estimate of the expenses at such a sum as in his judgment the charity of the parishioners ought ultimately to furnish. The plan was accepted and endorsed, and on Tuesday, February 20th, 1646, the first stone of the new edifice was laid by the Queen Regent, after it had been blessed by M. Alain de Solminihac, now Bishop of Cahors, with all the accustomed formalities. The Queen, on inspecting the plan, desired that one of the chapels behind the high altar, nearest to that of the Blessed Virgin, should be dedicated to her patroness, St. Anne, and another, in the name of the young King, to St. Louis. The Duc d'Orléans and the Prince de Condé made similar requests, an example that was followed by other noble families of the Faubourg; the Duke also promised an annual donation of 10,000 livres until the building should be completed. M. Olier, however, did not rely on the favour or the munificence of the

great, and an incident that occurred soon after the works had commenced was taken by him as a warning not to reckon on the support or promises of men for the success of an undertaking intended for God's glory alone. The workmen had dug a well to obtain water, and he was proceeding to ascertain its depth, when a pole on which he set his foot moved away and rolled over to the opposite side, carrying him with it, to the astonishment of those who were present, and who expected to see him precipitated into the pit. Instead of manifesting any alarm at the danger he had so narrowly escaped, he seemed to be occupied only with the thought of the lesson which it was intended to convey: "So deceitful is the dependence on creatures; he who puts his trust in them will find only weakness and inconstancy."

His intention, after laying the foundations of the choir, was to complete the construction of the Lady Chapel, as an act of fealty to Her whom he desired to instal as Patroness of the whole work, but owing to the troubles of the Fronde he was able only to finish its walls, which in the year of his death were raised to the height at which they remain at the present day. The building, interrupted for many years, was resumed in 1718 by M. Languet de Gergy,* M. Olier's sixth successor, by whom it was completed in 1745, just a century from the date of the attempt to expel the servant of God from the parish of St. Sulpice.

Foreseeing that the projected church would not be finished for many years, M. Olier was anxious to procure the erection of another church in the Faubourg to supply the immediate needs of the increasing population. The design was approved by the Abbé de St. Germain, who, in 1647, by letters patent created a new parish under the title of St. Maur in the Pré-aux-Clercs; but, on the wardens of St. Sulpice, with other parishioners, offering to provide a chapel of ease at their own expense, the plan was abandoned, and a house which the seminarists used for catechising children in the quarter called La Grenouillère was converted into a chapel and

* This worthy pastor was a man of extraordinary charity. In 1725, during a time of great scarcity, he sold his furniture, his paintings, and a quantity of rare and valuable objects which he had been at great pains to collect, and gave the proceeds for the relief of the suffering poor. From that time his only possessions were three *couverts* of silver, two straw chairs, and a bed of coarse serge, which was left him as a loan, to prevent his giving it away; carpets he had none. He also sent large sums to Marseilles, when in 1720 the plague was ravaging that city. The Abbé Languet was Mme. de Maintenon's confessor.

solemnly blessed on the feast of the Purification, 1648. This chapel went by the name of St. Anne, or the Petite-Paroisse, and for a while M. Olier located some of his priests in the spot, and formed what, in effect, was a second community. But, having reason to believe that the separation from the parent house was not conducive to the benefit of souls, and that the ecclesiastics thus detached experienced a diminution of fervour by being isolated from their brethren, he recalled them to St. Sulpice and contented himself with sending some of his colleagues on stated occasions to instruct the people and administer the sacraments.

It will be recollected that in 1643 M. Olier engaged the celebrated ex-Jesuit Père Véron, to deliver a course of controversial lectures at St. Sulpice and to hold public disputations with the sectaries; but the result corresponded neither with the hopes which his reputation had excited nor with the ability he displayed. M. du Ferrier, in his *Mémoires*, gives a specimen of the method pursued by this divine. "You would reform us," he would say, "on the sole authority of Scripture: well, we are ready to hear you. We believe, for example, that Jesus Christ is really and substantially present in the Eucharist; you believe He is there only by faith, and not in reality, and you are bound on your own principles to prove this to us by a formal text of Scripture. Produce it, then, and we will believe you." The Protestant minister would quote the words: "*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.*"* P. Véron, repeating the words after him, would say, "This is not to the purpose; I ask you for a passage which says, 'The Body of Jesus Christ is not in the Eucharist;' the text you have quoted does not say this." If the Protestant added what follows: "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life," he repeated his demand for a passage which said, "The Body of Jesus Christ is not under the species of bread;" showing them that they could not produce a text which expressly denied the Catholic doctrine. If his opponent brought forward those words of St. Peter: "*Jesus Christ, whom Heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things*,"† and argued thence that he could not be present in the Holy Eucharist, he replied, "I ask you for a passage which says that Jesus Christ is not there, and you give me only reasonings and conclusions. Confess that you have no direct passage to quote; we will come to reasonings and conclusions presently." He thus

* St. John vi. 64. † Acts iii. 21.

compelled them to admit that they could produce no direct and formal text of Scripture; and this provoked them greatly. He then came to deductions and conclusions. "You say that your faith is grounded, not on reasoning, but on Scripture only: now show me a passage which says that, if Jesus Christ must remain in Heaven until He comes to judge the world, He is therefore not in the Eucharist. In matters of faith we do not rest, as you truly say, on arguments and syllogisms; we Catholics also believe that Jesus Christ is, and will remain, in Heaven, at the right hand of the Father, but we do not the less believe that He is in the Eucharist, really and corporally, but after an incomprehensible manner."

By this system of dialectics his opponents, as before observed, were silenced, but they were not convinced. He even succeeded in obtaining from his auditors, Protestants as well as Catholics, a formal declaration of his victory, signed by public notaries, which was printed and placarded about the streets, but the Protestants remained Protestants still; they were not converted. His method was perfect; his syllogisms were unassailable; in the sphere of argument he was triumphant, and his opponents, by their silence, acknowledged their defeat; but M. Olier desired, not their defeat, but their salvation, and the end he sought remained unfulfilled.

Providence, however, brought to his aid two men whose manner and whose method were wholly different. Simple and illiterate, but wonderful adepts in a science truly divine, and which had God alone as its author, they seemed to fulfil to the letter that saying of M. Olier's while at Vaugirard: "God will rather create a new race of beings than leave His work without effect." The first of these extraordinary men was Jean Clément, by trade a cutler. In early youth his mind had been perverted by associating with the children of Casaubon, the celebrated critic, and, on the family removing to England, he repaired to La Rochelle, at that time the stronghold of the Calvinists, for the purpose of joining their sect. Having no acquaintance in the town, he addressed himself to an elderly man whom he saw labouring in a blacksmith's shop, and acquainted him with his design. To his surprise the old man replied, "Ah, my child, take heed what you do. Perhaps you may fall into the same state of misery in which I now am; for I know that I am doomed to hell for having quitted the Roman Church. I was a priest and a monk, and I cannot escape from the religion you are about to adopt, because I have a wife and four children dependent upon me." He then

bade the youth stay neither to eat nor to drink, but to leave the place at once, before God had wholly abandoned him. Filled with horror, Clément asked him whither he should go, and the old man directed him to proceed at once to the Curé of Estrée, six miles distant, who would instruct him and put him in the way of salvation. This advice he followed, remained ten days with the good priest of Estrée, and, on returning to Paris, devoted himself to the conversion of heretics, earning his livelihood at the same time by working at his trade.

His practice was to take up a position within the enclosure, or in the vaults of the church, after Père Véron had descended from the pulpit, and, letting the Protestants first adduce their texts of Scripture and urge their objections, he would explain the passages they had quoted, and show that rightly understood they were not opposed to the faith of Catholics; and then, in turn, propounding the true doctrine, he would support it by Scriptural proofs, so aptly chosen, and enforced with so much simplicity and sweetness, yet with such marvellous clearness and force, that numbers of those who had only been irritated and confounded by the arguments of the learned doctor were convinced and converted. He knew almost the whole of the Bible in French by heart, an accomplishment which gave him great influence with the Protestants; nor was his acquaintance with Catholic doctrine less extraordinary than his familiarity with Holy Scripture and his insight into the meaning of the sacred text. Indeed, such was the ability he displayed in the difficult art of controversy, that (as M. du Ferrier says in his *Mémoires*) the priests of the Community would often leave the dispute in his hands, when by a few words he would dissipate doubts which long hours of discussion had failed to remove. So great was his success that (as we learn from the same authority) in one year he made on an average six converts a day. These conversions were sometimes accompanied, in the case of very ignorant persons, with circumstances which showed that the grace of God gave an efficacy to his words indefinitely surpassing any persuasive power they might naturally possess; and M. du Ferrier, who, on P. Véron's falling ill, succeeded that theologian in the office of preaching to Protestants, records his conviction that argument has incalculably less to do with the conversion of souls than many are apt to suppose; for that he found on inquiry that the reasons which had weighed most with the persons he had addressed were such as had formed no part of his discourse.

The other gifted individual was Beaumais, a draper. Like

Clément, he was on the point of abandoning the faith for the purpose of marrying a Protestant, who made his apostacy the condition of her consent to the union, when remorse of conscience took him to Clément, who not only delivered him from the distressing doubts to which his mind was a prey, but induced him to join with him in combating heresy and teaching the truth. By a wonderful effect of divine grace he received an infused knowledge both of the true sense of Holy Scripture and of the right interpretation of the Fathers, wholly independent of any instruction or study; and at M. Olier's desire he established himself in the Faubourg St. Germain, where his exertions were crowned with astonishing success. His powers of disputation were allowed to surpass those of the ablest doctors of the University of Paris, and no one could be compared with him, uneducated as he was, for the facility and completeness with which he refuted the objections and exposed the inconsistencies of the Protestant teachers. His labours were not confined to this single parish, for he visited in turn the towns most infected with heresy, and succeeded in reclaiming large numbers of Calvinists to the faith of the Church. Beaumais, like Clément, did not quit his business as long as he remained at Paris. The clergy allowed him a pension of 400 livres, and he dined every Sunday with the seminarists of St. Sulpice. That Clément continued to work at his trade is proved by the fact that in the year 1649 he was chosen by the associated artisans of Paris to be their spokesman before the King and Queen. In his harangue, which was published, he speaks of himself as living by the labour of his hands. He died in 1650, or 1654, with the universal reputation of sanctity. Both Beaumais and Clément, it may be added, were equally skilful and successful in their disputations with Jansenists.

It would seem as if by these two striking examples God would prove to the clergy of France the little efficiency of educational polish, theological knowledge, or dialectic acuteness, when unaccompanied with those high moral qualifications and those supernatural virtues—humility, patience, sweetness, charity—which He requires in the preachers of His word. This it was which made Adrien Bourdoise so indignantly exclaim, "The world is sick enough, but the clergy is not less so; frivolity, impurity, immodesty everywhere prevail. Our priests for the most part stand with folded arms, and God is forced to raise up laymen—cutlers and haberdashers—to do the work of these lazy ecclesiastics. Seldom now-a-days do we meet with a man who is

well-born, learned, and at the same time a devoted servant of God. Whence is it that God makes use of M. Beaumais the draper and M. Clément the cutler, both laymen, as His instruments for the conversion of such numbers of heretics and bad Catholics at Paris, but that He finds not bachelors, licentiates, or doctors, filled with His Spirit, whom He can employ for the purpose? It is the heaviest reproach, the bitterest affront, He can offer to the clergy of an age so devoid of humility. Long live the draper and the cutler! '*Non multi sapientes, non multi potentes, non multi nobiles.*'" * Even if it be admitted that there was something of rhetorical exaggeration in this vehement protest, attributable to the ardent zeal of this outspoken man, it may at least be taken as indicative of the extent and the enormity of the evil against which it was directed.†

Unable to procure the discontinuance of the fair which, as we have seen, was held for two months together in the Faubourg St. Germain, M. Olier laboured to suppress some of the more flagrant scandals; as, for instance, the exhibition and exposure for sale of pictures and other objects offensive to modesty. With his habitual fearlessness he went himself into the midst of the crowds, and, with the authority which his very presence carried with it, succeeded in putting a stop to the worst disorders. When unable to go in person, he commissioned some of the more influential members of his community to act in his stead, and in cases where their interference was productive of little or no effect, he had recourse to the civil authorities, from whom, to their honour be it recorded, he never failed to receive prompt and effective support.

An incident which made some noise at the time may here be related. The head of a troop of strolling players who were performing during the fair fell dangerously ill, and desired to receive the Last Sacraments. The priest who attended him felt himself justified in giving him absolution, but refused to bring him the Holy Viaticum, on account of his profession, to which, as being dangerous to morals, a particular scandal attached. As the man grew worse, his friends came late at night to the Presbytery, and begged again and again that their dying comrade might be permitted to receive Communion; but M. Olier was inexorable. His refusal, which was conveyed in

* 1 Cor. i. 26.

† In Abelly's *Life of St. Vincent de Paul* we find two bishops using language, when writing to the Saint, no less condemnatory of the lives of the clergy in their respective dioceses.

terms of the most earnest charity, had such an effect on one of the party that, two days afterwards, from motives of conscience, he retired from the stage altogether; and, to M. Olier's joy and consolation, the sick man himself, acknowledging his unworthiness to receive the boon he had solicited, solemnly engaged from that moment to renounce his profession for ever, a promise which, on recovering his health, he faithfully performed. The occurrence created considerable sensation in Paris, and the matter was discussed at the monthly meeting of the clergy, who unanimously approved the conduct of the ecclesiastic in question. Nevertheless, it was deemed advisable to advert to the circumstance from the pulpit, and to enter fully into the reasons which justified the course that had been taken. It so happened that the manager of a company of actors, who styled himself *comedian* to the Duke of Orleans, was present at this discourse, and, offended at the same designation being applied to a mere strolling player, he went to the Presbytery and made a formal remonstrance. He met with a most courteous reception, and was patiently listened to while he enlarged on the dignity of his profession, as compared with that of an itinerant buffoon who performed before a rabble in a booth; but all that was urged in return made no impression upon him, and he was about to retire with a profusion of compliments expressive of the high esteem in which he held so zealous a body of ecclesiastics, when, on his politely declaring that his services would ever be at their command, the ecclesiastic to whom he addressed himself took him at his word, and said that there was one thing he could do by which he would infinitely oblige them. The actor again protested his readiness to do anything in his power. "Then," answered the other, "promise me that you will recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin every day on your knees." The actor willingly consented, little thinking to what he was engaging himself; for in a few days he returned to the Presbytery a changed man, declaring that he had once for all abandoned the stage, and was now in the service of M. de Fontenay-Mareuil, who was proceeding as ambassador to Rome.

How profound was the impression produced on the minds and consciences of the people by the zeal of M. Olier and his community, may be inferred from the fact that even Molière's * own troop of

* The name of this famous dramatist was Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, but he took the name of Molière to spare his parents, homely and worthy people, the disgrace, as it was then accounted, of being known to have a son connected with the stage.

comedians, despite his extraordinary talent both as a play-writer and as a performer in his own dramas, were obliged to disband because they found themselves deserted by their audience. The theatre was situated in the Faubourg St. Germain and was supported by the Prince de Conti, previously to his conversion, and by other young men of rank. Nevertheless, Molière himself, with a certain number of actors whom he engaged to accompany him, was fain to betake himself to the provinces, and did not return to Paris till the year after M. Olier's death.

Never was pastor more devoted to the interests of his flock. There is nothing, perhaps, of which an active-minded, hard-worked man is naturally more jealous than his time; yet M. Olier was ever at the disposal of others. With all his multifarious avocations, he was always accessible to those who sought his counsel or assistance; and such was his sweetness and kindliness of disposition that he could not bear to deny himself even to those who seemed to wish to converse with him solely for their own gratification. He received all comers with a certain respect, blended with humility, never betrayed any movement of impatience at being detained from his other occupations, and was never the first to terminate the interview. Sometimes when, towards the end of the day, his colleagues observed that he was exhausted with fatigue, they would suggest that he should admit no more visitors until the morrow; but he would answer, "Our time is not our own; it belongs to Jesus Christ. We ought to employ every moment of it as He directs; and since He permits these persons to come to us now, so far from not admitting them, we ought, in a spirit of submission to His adorable providence, to receive them with joy and affection." A charity so self-sacrificing was accompanied with a sensible blessing; for many who were leading a sinful, worldly life, and who visited him simply from motives of courtesy, were converted and gained to God, although the conversation apparently had been confined to ordinary subjects. The influence he thus acquired was very great, and he used it to induce persons engaged in the world and moving in its highest circles to lead, nevertheless, a devout and interior life. Under his

Sufficient reason for the disfavour with which he was regarded by the Church may be found in the fact that "the tendency of his dramatic productions was to lower the moral standard, by almost invariably engaging the sympathy of the audience and getting the laugh on the side of the wrong-doer, by whose superior smartness honesty, truth, and justice are made ridiculous" (*The Month*, May, 1884, p. 151), and, it may be added, to render piety and devotion contemptible and odious.

direction, numbers of public men, holding judicial and other civil appointments, as well as many ladies of the first distinction, practised daily meditation, spiritual reading, and other devotional exercises, without, therefore, neglecting any of their social or official duties; while others, of all classes, who had more leisure at their command, he encouraged to adopt a fixed rule of life, and assigned them particular hours in each day for mental prayer, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, assisting the sick poor, and similar works of charity.

He exhorted fathers of families to give a vigilant eye to the conduct of their children and dependents, and to see that they obeyed the precepts of the Church, particularly in keeping holy the Sundays and other festivals, and observing the days of fasting and abstinence. On the rich especially he urged the obligation of regulating their household expenditure in conformity with the rules of Christian modesty and sobriety, of practising almsgiving according to their ability, and, in short, fulfilling all the duties proper to their state and sanctifying each day by a good use of that precious time of which God, the Judge of all, would demand a strict account. He reminded shopkeepers and workpeople, who had to attend to the calls of business and maintain themselves by the labour of their hands, that they were none the less bound to live as Christians,—as those who by baptism had been made the children of God and heirs of eternal life,—and taught them how, in the midst of their every-day employment, they were to keep their consciences clean, to lift up their hearts to God, and refer all their acts to Him, not only those which directly concerned piety, but even the most indifferent and commonplace. These holy lessons he set forth, in detail, in a work which he composed for the use of his parishioners and entitled *The Christian Day.* Further, he bade his people remember that they had duties to perform as members of civil society, which was the ordinance of God; that no man, whatever his rank or condition, was independent of his neighbour, or could so much as exist without his co-operation and assistance; accordingly, that in the exercise of their several trades and handicrafts they ought to regard themselves simply as the instruments of Divine Providence whose office it was to help in supporting their fellow-creatures, and that buyers and employers should receive with thanksgiving the goods they purchased and the products with which they were supplied, as coming from the hands of God. "If," said he, "all would enter into these Christian views, trade and commerce,

instead of being made the occasion of fraud and injustice, would become, as Providence designed them to be, a daily source of graces and a very means of sanctification."*

From the moment M. Olier first entertained the idea of undertaking the pastoral charge of St. Sulpice, he had resolved on the establishment of a house in which females could attend all the exercises of a retreat, an advantage which hitherto had been denied them. This design, with the aid of Marie Rousseau, he now carried into effect. At first only women of the lower ranks were admitted to these retreats, but afterwards the higher classes enjoyed the same privilege. This institution was also made subservient to the accomplishment of another very important object. In every large parish there are numerous works to be done which zealous and prudent females, like the Deaconesses of the primitive Church, are well qualified to undertake, some, indeed, with which it might be unadvisable for the clergy personally to concern themselves; as, for instance, the maintenance and supervision of fallen women who desire to reform their lives. But there were many other offices of a kindred nature in which they were employed, according to their condition and capacity. Thus, some were charged with instructing and preparing young girls for domestic service, or placing them with persons who would act as parents and guardians to them until such time as they were able to maintain themselves. Others, again, occupied their leisure hours with making clothes for the poor, or furnishing linen and ornaments for the altar and seeing to the cleaning and repairing of the same. All these works were placed under the direction of three widows selected for their eminent virtues and abilities, with whom were associated other widows and younger women who, after being themselves instructed and trained, were employed as school-teachers. The latter, before entering on their duties, were required to pass an examination at the Abbey of St. Germain, in order to prove their efficiency and fitness for their office.

Among the parishioners who took a prominent part in these

* M. Faillon, in one of those valuable notes which follow each chapter in his work, gives an extract from an address of M. Olier's on this subject which, instructive as it is to read, must have been most effective when delivered, containing as it does lessons of far greater practical value than may be found in many an elaborate treatise on social economy and science which ignores the relations of man to man as God in His Providence established them.

various works of charity may especially be mentioned Marguerite Rouillé, widow of Jacques Le Bret, Royal Counsellor at the Châtelet de Paris, who in 1648, conjointly with other ladies, founded a school for poor girls. With her was associated another remarkable woman, who has already been incidentally alluded to, Mme. Claude de Sève, widow of M. Tronson, formerly Secrétaire du Cabinet. She had been under the direction of P. de Condren, and at his death had, by the advice of P. de Saint-Pé,* a priest of the Oratory, taken M. Olier as her spiritual guide. To her are addressed many of his letters, still preserved, which are a monument at once of the pastor's enlightened zeal and of his penitent's rare perfections. But the greatest work of all, and that which may be said to have been the complement of the rest, was the establishment of a central house, called La Maison d'Instruction, in which young girls who had left school and whom their parents had not the means of supporting were taught useful handicrafts by which they might be able to earn a decent livelihood. This institution originated with Marie Rousseau, who had commenced a similar undertaking in her own dwelling, but in 1657 it was transferred to more commodious premises, and, after receiving the approbation of the Vicar-General of the Abbey and the royal confirmation by letters patent, was erected into a community, which became known as that of the Sisters of Christian Instruction. The rules were drawn up by Marie Rousseau and the house itself placed under the immediate direction of that saintly woman, who was thus enabled to devote her whole energies to the accomplishment of the reforms for which she had prayed so long and laboured so much. She had a most valuable assistant in the person of Mlle. Leschassier, in connection with whom a characteristic incident was before related. This lady was as distinguished for her rare talents and intelligence as for her untiring zeal, and the fruits of her labours were such as to vindicate in a remarkable manner the spiritual discernment of M. Olier, who had advised

* Père de Saint-Pé became Superior of St. Magloire, and, after the death of their holy founder, the Sulpicians had frequent recourse to him for advice and encouragement, regarding him as the inheritor of P. de Condren's spirit and maxims. It is to P. de Saint-Pé that we are chiefly indebted for the work published (as already mentioned) under the name of P. de Condren and entitled *L'Idée du Sacerdoce et du Sacrifice de Jésus-Christ*, which contains the substance of certain conferences which that celebrated man delivered to the Oratorians at their house of Notre Dame des Ardilliers, at Saumur, but of which only the first part can, properly speaking, be attributed to him.

her not to enter religion, as she was once disposed to do, but to remain in the world and dedicate herself to the service of the poor of Christ. She made herself the friend of all who needed help, particularly of the women and girls, whom she consoled in their troubles and fortified by her counsels with a tender solicitude and a keenness of perception as to their individual characters and requirements so remarkable, as to show that she was endowed with a special gift for the fulfilment of the ends to which she had devoted her life. To her was committed the superintendence of the Orphanage which M. Olier subsequently founded, and which was mainly supported by her munificence. The immediate management of the institution was confided, on the nomination of the wardens and with the approval of the Abbé de St. Germain, to Mlle. Anne de Valois, who from the purest motives of charity undertook the personal care and instruction of the inmates.

Some estimate may be formed of the readiness with which all classes responded to the call of their pastor, and of the vast amount of hard work which was accomplished under his direction, if we enumerate the several meetings which were held every month for the transaction of business in connection with the various institutions. Thus, the first and third Sundays were devoted to new converts, whether from heresy or from a life of sin; the second and fourth to the bashful poor, whose condition was often far more pitiable than that of persons whose destitution was apparently as great or even greater; while the first Saturday and the twenty-fifth day of each month were set apart for receiving poor children into the free schools. On the first and third Sundays also the *Conseil Charitable*, of which more will be said hereafter, held its sittings for the settlement of disputes and the prevention of litigation. Other meetings were held on the first Thursday in each month for relieving the sick poor; on the first Saturday for assisting poor cripples, the blind, the paralytic, and other sufferers; on the second Thursday for supplying little children with milk and farinaceous food, and engaging nurses for those whose mothers were unable to render them the personal care they needed. In fine, certain ecclesiastics were charged on particular days with procuring the liberation of prisoners, while some of the more experienced ladies of the Faubourg undertook to provide work for girls who were without employment. "The zeal displayed by the parishioners of St. Sulpice," says M. du Ferrier, "was the theme of universal admiration; it was only

necessary to propose good works, whether corporal or spiritual, and persons were always to be found ready to execute them."

Of M. Olier's filial love and veneration for the Sovereign Pontiff it is needless to speak. Devotion to the Chair of Peter was with him an integral part of Christian piety, an indispensable element in the spiritual life.* The obedience he rendered to the Vicar of Christ was not the mere submission of heart and will to an authority ordained of God; he recognised therein the priesthood and the royalty of Jesus and the energizing presence of the very Spirit of Truth and of Power. But, in addition to all this, as Curé of St. Sulpice, he was bound by special ties to the Holy See. From ancient times St. Peter had been the principal patron of the church, and was still so regarded, although, owing to the multitude of miracles which were wrought on occasion of the translation of the relics of St. Sulpice in the year 1518, it had come to be called, as it has continued to be called, by the name of the latter. Moreover (as was before stated) the parish was subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the Holy See, as represented by the Abbé de St. Germain. The following extract from M. Olier's spiritual writings shows the value he attached to this circumstance, and the fruit he sought to derive from the contemplation of it. "By a particular order of Divine Providence," he says, "the Faubourg St. Germain, which from time immemorial the Holy See has reserved in immediate dependence on itself in token of its universal jurisdiction, is governed by the Abbé de St. Germain, to whom the Holy Father gives episcopal authority over this territory. But, seeing that, although he invests him with this authority, he does not impress upon him the character of the episcopate, which nevertheless is a source of life to us—as in every diocese it is the principle of that influence which sanctifies the whole flock,—it is not his wish thereby to deprive the people of St. Germain of that aid, or to take from them that which ordinarily is the animating principle of all parishes. He seems rather to desire to reserve to himself that holy influence obliging us to regard him as the sole principle of our life, and to derive from him the spirit which other dioceses find in their bishops. We ought, in consequence, to have a great trust and an unfailing confidence in the Prince of the Apostles, and esteem ourselves happy that the goodness of God obliges us thereto, by giving

* This idea was developed with singular force and beauty by Father Faber in his Sermon on *Devotion to the Pope*, published in 1860.

him to us as our patron and requiring his image to be always exposed upon the altar of our church and ever present before our eyes. Moreover, all the exterior forms of worship are the same in our church as they are at Rome; for we use the same chant, the same ceremonies, the same ritual, and, as these things are but an expression of the interior spirit and hidden life which reigns in the Church, they represent to us the spirit, grace, and life which flow from the Holy Father our Head, and oblige us to show him special reverence, submit ourselves humbly to his rule, and, in his person, to the divine apostolate of St. Peter, in order that we may have a share in that fulness of spirit which is in him and distribute it through the world."

In the same spirit of obedience to the authority of the Church, and, indeed, to the slightest indications of its will, this true pastor of souls strove to interest his people in the devotions and ceremonies which marked the different times and seasons of the ecclesiastical year, and instruct them in their deep significance. He deemed it a matter of the utmost importance that they should be imbued with this knowledge, as being a most effectual means of familiarising their minds with the several mysteries of the Incarnate Word and thereby leading them to reform and sanctify their lives. He seemed to have received a particular gift for explaining these things, and the fruits were both conspicuous and abundant. It has been said that the sermons and the numerous offices of the Church were largely attended by all classes, but M. Olier succeeded also in inspiring a special devotion for pilgrimages, and particularly for that of Notre Dame des Vertus, at Aubervilliers, near St. Denis,*

* This pilgrimage owes its origin to a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin, which, in 1338, attracted an immense concourse of people to the spot. During the spring of that year there was a great dearth of water; but on the second Tuesday in the month of May, a young girl, going to decorate the image with flowers, was surprised to observe it all bathed in moisture, notwithstanding the heat and dryness of the season. On the people assembling at the tidings, there fell an abundant supply of rain, which was followed by a number of miracles, and, among the rest, by the restoration to life of two children, which took place under circumstances which precluded the possibility of fraud or collusion. Hence the shrine acquired the name of Notre Dame des Vertus, or Our Lady of Miracles, for such is the meaning attached to the term. It was here that M. Olier (as related in chapter ix.) received those remarkable favours from heaven, previous to the establishment of the Seminary of Vaugirard. From 1646 to 1689 the seminarists of St. Sulpice took part in the parochial procession, but in the latter year the pilgrimage was discontinued in consequence of certain

which was performed every year on Whit-Tuesday by the parishioners and seminarists of St. Sulpice; members of the higher classes taking part therein, to the great edification of the people. It was an act of devotion which involved no slight amount of labour and fatigue, as the procession left the church at half-past two in the morning and did not return till late in the day, halting on the way both at La Villette and at St. Lazare.

This general renewal of piety was accompanied with a corresponding increase of reverence for the priestly character and office, and the clergy were able to go at all hours into the loneliest quarters of the city without fear of injury or insult. The very thieves and street-robbers treated them with respect; and M. du Ferrier relates how, being surrounded one dark night by a gang of these men, who felt his clothes in order to ascertain whether he wore a cassock, he had the courage to harangue them on the infamy of their lives, and with such effect that they offered themselves as an escort to protect him on his way home, and promised to abandon their evil courses. On the occasion, also, of a tumult caused by the revival of an obnoxious tax,* when a violent mob were trying to break into the church, in order to sound the tocsin and summon the people to arms, he affected to believe that they were Huguenots who had come with the intention of profaning the sacred building and offering outrage to the Blessed Sacrament. On their protesting they were Catholics,—"What!" he cried, "do you believe that our Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the tabernacle in the holy ciborium?" "We do," they replied. "Then, my dear friends," said he, "how

abuses which occurred, and was replaced, first, by one to the Val de Grace and, afterwards, by one to Notre Dame de Paris; but in 1750 the practice was entirely relinquished. The seminarists, however, still retained a particular devotion to the place, and to this day make pilgrimages to it during their vacation.

* In November 1549 Henri II., alarmed at the dimensions which the capital was rapidly assuming, had prohibited the further erection of houses in the suburbs. This edict, if ever in force, had long become obsolete when Cardinal Mazarin, desiring to replenish the coffers of the State, imposed a tax on all proprietors of houses in the faubourgs in proportion to the area which they severally occupied, and which was to be determined by actual measurement. Hence the name *Toisé*, by which the tax came to be called. Immediately, however, on the first measurement being taken, so violent a tumult arose that the unpopular tax was never actually levied, and in 1640 was definitively repealed. In 1672, Louis XIV. renewed the impost, on the ground that the extension of the city boundaries and consequent increase of the population rendered it extremely difficult for the civil authorities to provide for the maintenance either of order or of morality.

do you dare to force open His gates, when you would not venture to burst into the chamber of the King, if you knew he was within?" The men felt the force of the rebuke, and by this simple appeal to their faith in the Tremendous Mystery of the Altar he succeeded in quieting their minds and turning them from their purpose.

We cannot more fitly conclude this account of what will ever rank in the annals of the Church as one of the most marvellous transformations, moral and religious, which was ever effected, than by quoting the words of an historian * who wrote at a date when the completeness of the reformation was placed beyond dispute. "At the time when the Seminary was founded, the parish of St. Sulpice," he says, "was a very sink of iniquity and of every abomination which it is possible to imagine. It resembled that infamous city which the Prophet Isaias † depicts as a harlot or adulteress, so detestable and so numerous were the crimes of which it was the scene. This modern Sodom was the abode of libertines, atheists, and heretics, who there were free to indulge their worst passions with impunity. It was by a particular dispensation of His Providence in regard to this faubourg that God raised up M. Olier and his zealous fellow-labourers, who, burning with the desire of promoting His glory, broke up this ungrateful soil, replete, like that of Canaan before the Israelites entered in, with every manner of foulness and impurity. By the unwearied labours of these evangelical husbandmen it became a very land of promise, where each taught his neighbour to know and glorify God. It was easy to note the change that had taken place by the frequent confessions, the numerous restitutions, the submission shown to the laws of the Church, the earnestness displayed in attending the divine offices, the hungering after the word of God, the contrition and penitence of a multitude of prodigals, who came to detest in the bitterness of their conscience the enormities of their past life."

* M. Faillon does not mention the author's name, doubtless because it was unknown to him. His reference, in the margin, is simply *Rem. Hist.* (*Réminiscences Historiques*). The writer had evidently a personal knowledge of what he relates.

† Isaias i. 21, &c.

CHAPTER XI.

M. OLIER AND THE JANSENISTS.

WE should gain but a very inadequate idea of the services which this great man rendered to religion, if we excluded from our consideration the prominent part he took in resisting the insidious encroachments of the Jansenistic heresy, which all this time was spreading like a pestilence through the Church of France, and insinuating its baneful virus among the religious bodies, both of men and women, especially in and about the capital.

The Jansenists, it must ever be remembered, came forward in the first instance in the guise of zealous reformers, protesting loudly against the scandals which all good men deplored and were labouring to remove, and exhibiting an unwonted fervour of devotion and austerity of life. This apparent strictness with themselves and display of earnestness had the effect of deceiving many who, if they had discerned the true motive of all these ardent professions and the real import of the tenets with which they were accompanied, would have been foremost in their condemnation. Of such was M. Bourdoise, who, captivated by the specious piety and severe morality of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran,* was slow to credit the warnings which keener-sighted friends gave him as to the real character and

* Jean du Verger de Hauranne, called, from his abbey, Saint-Cyran, was born at Bayonne in 1581. He was a personal friend of Cornelius Jansen, author of the *Augustinus*, who was for some time professor in that town and afterwards at Louvain, and in 1635 became Bishop of Ypres. Saint-Cyran wrote several works giving a practical development to the pernicious principles maintained in that work, and was successful in seducing many to his views, among whom were Antoine Arnauld and his too celebrated sister, Angélique, Superioress of Port Royal. Imprisoned by Richelieu for teaching false doctrine, he was liberated on the death of that powerful minister, December 4th, 1642, but died on the 11th of October in the following year. He was buried in the parish church of St. Jacques du Haut Pas, and his tomb became an object of veneration to his devoted followers, who made frequent pilgrimages thereto, especially on Saturdays.

intentions of the man; and even when his eyes were opened it was some time before he could be induced to exercise that vigilance in the admission of fresh members into his community which the necessity of the case demanded. Towards the end of 1640 (as related at the time) a breach had all but occurred in consequence between M. Olier's infant society and himself. He was at length completely undeceived, but not before the wolf, who had found an entrance into the fold, had succeeded in carrying off one of the most promising of his flock.*

M. Olier, on the other hand, never hesitated for a moment; from the first he had an instinctive feeling of distrust and repulsion for the whole party, and it will ever be one of the chief glories of the Seminary of St. Sulpice that it stood as an impregnable bulwark against the errors of Jansenism, and that this odious heresy could never boast of having gained a footing within its walls. A mortified life, however, and earnestness in the cause of ecclesiastical reform, were identified in the minds of many with a leaning to the new opinions, and it was the policy of the sect to encourage the delusion. To those who disliked M. Olier's spirituality and zeal, but who were withheld from condemning, even to themselves, what their consciences told them they ought rather to admire and applaud, it was a kind of relief to be able to set him down as a favourer of Jansenism; and the party itself was only too eager to claim him as an ally. A public protest which he felt himself compelled to make against a certain confessor, who had been called in to a sick person, and whose practice was in accordance with those maxims of false leniency which, as has been said, were in vogue at the time, was seized upon both by Jansenists and by indifferent Catholics as a confirmation of the suspicion already afloat. "I detest these lax maxims," said the servant of God, "as I detest everything which is not in conformity with the purity of the Gospel; I have a thousand times more horror of them than of the open suggestions of Satan, and would much rather behold a sick man besieged by a legion of the spirits of darkness than see him put his trust in a casuist who, to make broader the way of salvation, opens to him the gate of Hell." A declaration so decisive was taken as a pronouncement in favour of the no less fatal rigorism which was one of the distinctive signs of Jansenistic predilections, and M. Olier, who would have remained silent under any ordinary calumny, considered it his

* See page 100.

duty, when his orthodoxy was called in question, to rebut in the face of the Church a charge so injurious to his influence as a pastor of souls. This he did, not in the way of passionate self-defence or of a vehement attack on either of the two opposite errors, but by a simple and powerful exposition of the Catholic doctrine, in language which could admit but of one interpretation. From this moment he became the object of a relentless hostility which did not terminate even with his life; but he never flinched from the unequal contest, —unequal where one side dealt in unscrupulous falsehood and the other adhered to the strictest requirements of charity and truth; and the only effect of the persecution he encountered was to make him redouble his exertions to protect his people against the unceasing machinations of the innovators. Some of his associates, indeed, indignant at the calumnies which were being promulgated against him, were preparing to undertake his defence, but the servant of God, on being made aware of their intention, had their writings brought to him and thrust them into the fire, saying, "Do you not know that calumny is one of the rewards which God bestows on those who defend religion? Let us bless Him in that He has deemed us worthy of suffering persecution for having upheld His interests."

Heresy is a hateful and a fearful thing; open, avowed hostility to the authority of Christ's Church and to its teachings. But there is something still more hateful and more fearful; heresy, not merely nascent, undeveloped, undeclared, but hidden and disguised,— secretly lurking within the Church itself, dissembling its hostility, professing submission, protesting fidelity. Such was Jansenism; insidious, hypocritical, insincere; in a word, dishonest: this it was that made it so powerful for mischief.* A letter, which M. Olier addressed to the Marquise de Portes, who was under his direction, but had allowed herself to be entangled in its toils, so clearly illustrates the disingenuousness of these false brethren, and at the same time brings out into such strong relief his own uprightness and sincerity, that a portion of it may here be quoted. "I cannot express to you," he writes, "my grief and my confusion at the tidings I have received. I am assured that you are in private correspondence with the Jansenists, and that in your letters you evince a great zeal in upholding their party. For more than

* A rapid but comprehensive and graphic sketch of the history and spirit of Jansenism, with its baneful influences and effects, has been given by F. Dalgairns in his *Devotion to the Heart of Jesus.*

eight months I have continued to refuse credence to the different reports that have reached me, relying on your own assertions in spite of all the testimonies to the contrary; but of late such convincing proofs have been brought before me that I cannot doubt any longer. My very dear daughter, what would you have me do for you? If you have lost confidence in me, you are quite right in believing than I can only be irksome and useless to you. No one can serve two masters, as our Lord says, or obey in simplicity two persons opposed to each other in their sentiments and maxims. . . . I am sure that my heart is wholly yours, in the charity of Jesus Christ, to aid you and to serve you; but I doubt very much whether I ought to allow you any longer to practise this feigned confidence and submission. I may safely say that I have never abandoned a soul which Jesus Christ entrusted to me, and that I have always been careful not to give it any just cause for leaving me; but, when I see a soul following two different paths, and joining finesse to concealment, after once making known to it my views and convictions I let it go its own ways, knowing that it cannot take a more dangerous course than one of divided direction, especially if it incline towards the bad side. My very dear and esteemed daughter, if you will promise me, in Jesus Christ, to hold no further communication with that party, which is creating a formal schism in the Church and which persists in maintaining the new opinions in defiance of authority, I can assure you, in our Lord, that I will render you all the service and all the assistance which you could expect from one in my position. But it is not possible, nor is it permissible, for me to assist souls which range themselves on the side of a party which opposes and, indeed, assails the spouse of Jesus Christ, the Holy Church, whose wounds and wrongs are more painful to Him than were those which He endured in His own person.

"What would you say, my daughter, of those who assert that the Church is in error and the fosterer of heresies; who profess that their object is to reform her, and, instead of combating her enemies, in order either to convert them or to put them to the rout, are for ever railing at their mother, rending her heart, and tearing her to pieces with unparalleled affliction and desolation? You see nothing where you are. You are furnished only with good books,—such, for instance, as recommend almsgiving, because you have an inclination that way. Under pretexts the most specious these

gentlemen neglect works of the greatest moment, in order to further their own malignant views; they despise all who do not adopt them, and even brand them as heretics and schismatics. Because we preach that Jesus Christ died for all, they are scandalized. They go so far as to complain and express their displeasure aloud in the churches, as they did in our own only three days ago. In short, in all their proceedings they give frightful signs of passion, anger, and rancour, which make one shudder. My daughter, we must not believe every spirit, as St. John warns us,* nor, as St. Paul says,† be led away with various and strange doctrines. Beware! error has always insinuated itself into the Church under the disguise of reform. The last heretics declared that their doctrine was that of the primitive Church, founded on the word of Jesus Christ, accompanying their preachings with bounteous alms and announcing everywhere a reformation of manners exceeding even that of the Church herself. When asked who sent them, they replied, 'No one; we come of ourselves;' and when again they were asked where, then, were the signs of their extraordinary mission, and the approbation of the Holy See, they made no answer, for they had none to make. Nevertheless, they continued spreading abroad their doctrine, without mission, without the approbation of their superiors,—a condition absolutely indispensable, and one which has always been so regarded in the Church. St. Paul himself, Apostle as he was, took his directions from St. Peter.‡ No, without submission there is no security; besides, I see in those who have gained you over to their party so much obstinacy, impetuosity, contempt of all who do not think as they do,—so much esteem of themselves, to the prejudice of the Church and of the whole body of the faithful; and it is this alarms me about you. Beware, then, of this dangerous leaven; and, however fair the exterior of those of whom I speak, make haste to separate yourself from them, that you may be united only to Jesus Christ, and to the purity of the faith, which will ever be the same in the Church, because Jesus Christ will ever be with her."

Brother John of the Cross would also have fallen a victim to their artifices but for M. Olier's sharp remonstrances. He had taken to going every Sunday to hear the preaching at Port Royal, his attraction being, not the sermons, which were beyond his com-

* 1 St. John iv. 1. † Heb. xiii. 9.
‡ Gal. i. 18, 19.

prehension, but a paraphrase of the Gospel, which M. Singlin, who since Saint-Cyran's death had become the patriarch of the sect, was in the habit of giving in French, a practice which he thought betokened great zeal for the word of God; and it required much firmness and not less tact on the part of M. Olier to keep this simple and illiterate man from being taken in the snare.

Owing to the troublous state of the times, and the consequent occupation of those who ought to have endeavoured to suppress the rising evil, the audacity of the sectaries increased every day. The machinations to which they secretly resorted, and the influence which they possessed in certain high quarters, had the effect of deterring many who had no leaning to their errors from making a public protest and causing them to take refuge in a safe silence for fear of incurring the enmity of Port Royal; while preachers and professors, even when opposing and refuting the new doctrines, were careful to make no allusion to Jansenius or his tenets, but to combat them under titles borrowed from the heresies of an earlier date, a disloyal and cowardly mode of action which—it hardly need be stated—found no favour with M. Olier and the Sulpicians. Many, again, of the Parisian clergy openly sided with the party, among whom—strange to say—was M. Copin, Curé of Vaugirard, who, notwithstanding the important services which the Sulpicians had never ceased to render him, in supplying by their ministrations for his frequent absence from his parish, now assumed a hostile attitude, and thwarted and molested them by every means within his power, even preventing the bells being rung as usual on occasion of the procession which (as will be recollected) the parishioners of St. Sulpice, with the clergy and wardens at their head, were wont to make every year to Vaugirard on the feast of St. Mark.* This vexatious proceeding on the part of the Curé, we may here remark, had no permanent results, for, indignant at the treatment which the Sulpicians had received, the people of Vaugirard petitioned that the ancient practice might be continued, engaging to show them the accustomed tokens of respect, which accordingly was done, and we mention the circumstance simply as a specimen of the methods of annoyance to which the partisans of the new opinions were not ashamed to have recourse. But, indeed, any weapon, any artifice, by which they might hope to

* It was on occasion of this procession in 1642 that M. de Fiesque first proposed to make over the parish of St. Sulpice to M. Olier.

injure or discredit the champions of orthodoxy was legitimate in their eyes. They spared neither calumny nor menace, they assailed them in lampoons and scurrilous pamphlets, they railed at them in their sermons, publicly accusing M. Olier of being himself the innovator and the author of a schism in the Church. This, indeed, was the course which they invariably pursued. Condemned again and again by the Holy See, to whose judgment they affected to bow, they impudently persisted in retorting on the Catholics the charge of introducing strange doctrines. To teach that Christ died for all, that the commandments of God are capable of being observed, that grace may be resisted—this with them was heresy; while the contrary propositions they declared to be of faith. Accordingly, they denounced the Sulpicians as Pelagians, or Semi-Pelagians, pretending that they referred all to nature and made no account of grace. "On the contrary," writes M. Olier, "we say with St. Paul, that '*we are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God; for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish according to His good will.*'* We refer to nature nothing that is supernatural; in ourselves we are no more capable of willing or accomplishing supernatural things than we are of thinking them. We have need of grace always and in all things; and we can do nothing without the grace of God. What more can we say?"

As already intimated, the Fathers of the Oratory took side with M. Olier's accusers, and endeavours were accordingly made by the Jansenistic party to establish an Oratorian house in the Faubourg with the view of recommending their pernicious errors to the parishioners of St. Sulpice. So unceasing were their efforts, and so powerful the support which they received in influential quarters, that their success appeared to be assured, and many members of the Community were filled with alarm, believing that they would have to abandon the field to their adversaries. But M. Olier's courage was equal to the emergency, and, as the sequel will show, the Oratory was never permitted to effect an entrance into the parish. For the present, having learned that two of its leading members, noted adherents of Saint-Cyran,—P. Séguenot, Superior of the house at Saumur, and P. Toussaint Desmares, who was held in great repute for his rhetorical powers,—had been invited to preach in Paris, he succeeded in obtaining an inhibition from the

* 2 Cor. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 13.

Archbishop, which was immediately put in force.* At the same time, Dom Placide Roussel, Prior of the Abbey of St. Germain, who, like his predecessor, Dom Grégoire Tarrisse, was a staunch friend of M. Olier, issued a *mandement*, dated the 14th of June, 1650, ordering that no sermons should be delivered during the Octave of Corpus Christi in any of the chapels belonging to the various communities in the Faubourg without his express permission, and interdicting preachers, on any pretext whatever, from touching on the points which were so hotly debated. The faithful generally, he said, including religious, need know no more than this—that if they are saved it will be solely through the goodness and mercy of God, and if they are lost it will be the just punishment of their sins and offences. From this it may be seen, as the Abbé Faillon observes, how very far the Reform of St. Maur, in the days of its first fervour, was from giving any support to Jansenism.

Having failed to penetrate within the Seminary or to win over any of its inmates to their views, the innovators directed their efforts to the perversion of the laity, and, unhappily, with only too great effect; for they succeeded in enlisting among their followers several persons of rank and position, whose houses they made so many schools in which to expound and propagate their pestilential doctrines. Of these powerful auxiliaries none exercised a larger influence that the Duc and Duchesse de Liancourt. The Duke in his younger days had been the associate of men who were notorious for their libertinism and their irreligion, and, in particular, of Théophile de Viau, whom the Parliament of Paris had condemned to banishment for his open avowal of atheism. But of late years the Duke had given great edification to the parishioners by his attention to his religious duties and his active co-operation in every good work. Both he and the Duchess were persons of cultivated tastes and highly intellectual, and their house was frequented by all who had made themselves a name in the world of letters. Among others, the Abbé de Bourzeis, of the French Academy, an ardent Jansenist, but who had the address to conceal his real opinions, was introduced to them as a person of remarkable talent, who in literary ability ranked next to the famous Arnauld. Knowing the Duchess to be prejudiced against the new doctrines owing to the adverse

* P. Séguenot had, in 1638, been sent to the Bastille by Cardinal de Richelieu on account of the part he took in favour of Saint-Cyran; and in 1648 P. Desmares, by order of the Queen Regent, had been prohibited from preaching.

impressions which she had received from the Queen Regent, he professed at first to be in perfect accord with her and warmly advocated the opposite side.* After a while, however, he adroitly changed his line of action and, broaching Jansenistic tenets, as though he had derived them from a study of St. Augustine, insensibly imbued her mind with the poison of heresy. The Duke, who was a clever man but one who did not trouble himself to look deeply into things, was easily won over by his wife, to whose judgment he was in the habit of deferring. Thus the Hôtel de Liancourt, which stood in the Rue de Seine, not far from the church of St. Sulpice, became the headquarters of the party, where the Abbé de Bourzeis, the Père Toussaint Desmares, the Père Jacques Esprit, and other Jansenistic leaders met to confer together and, under the guise of free discussion, covertly to impose their false Gospel on the acceptance of the company.

The Maréchal de Schomberg, brother of the Duchess, was strongly opposed to the new opinions, and would fain have induced his sister to consult her Curé, M. Olier, but, being fully aware of his sentiments on the subject, she refused to do so; and a conference at which she consented to be present between her adviser, De Bourzeis, and Alphonse Le Moyne, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, had only the effect of confirming her in her errors and rendering her more obstinate than before in her adherence to the party.

Another rendezvous of the Port-Royalists was the Hôtel de Nevers, occupied by the Comte and Comtesse du Plessis de Guénégaud. The Count, who was Secretary of State, took but small interest in religious concerns, but the *salon* of his wife, Isabelle de Choiseul, was the resort of all that was most distinguished at the bar and in the senate and, indeed, it may be said, of all that was most brilliant in the world of fashion. But, besides these private *réunions*, the churches of St. Merry and of Port Royal, at which M. du Hamel and M. Singlin respectively held forth every Sunday, were attended by an aristocratic throng, including the Duc de Luynes, son of the Constable and a parishioner of St. Sulpice, who was won over to the party by P. Desmares during a stay he made

* Before she was seduced into adopting Jansenistic tenets, the Duchess composed a rule of life for her grand-daughter on the occasion of her marriage with the Prince de Marsillac; an admirable little work, which was published in 1698, and reprinted in 1881, with a notice from the pen of the Marquise de Forbin d'Oppède.

at the Château de Liancourt, the Marquis de Laignes, Counsellor of State, Charles de Bernières and Jean Lenain, Maîtres des Requêtes, the Comtesse de Chavigny, the Comtesse de Brienne, Mme. de Sablé, and the notorious Anne de Rohan, Princesse de Guémené,* all of whom exhibited a fanatical zeal in propagating the doctrines of the sect.

It may be imagined with what anguish of heart the servant of God beheld the ravages which heresy was making in his flock, and especially among those whose influence for good and for evil was so powerful. Particularly did he deplore the open support which the Duc and Duchesse de Liancourt were rendering to the Jansenistic cause. Alarmed at the perils with which he saw them encompassed, and grieved at the injurious example they were presenting to his people, he neglected no means of withdrawing them from the course on which they had embarked. Hoping, therefore, to attach him by closer ties to his parish church and at the same time to bring him into more immediate relations with himself as his pastor, he invited the Duke to undertake the office of warden which had become vacant by the death of M. Lecoigneux, President of the Parliament of Mortier. The Duke readily consented, and M. Olier availed himself of the occasion to represent to him the satisfaction it would cause, not only to himself, but to the parishioners generally, if he would give some public attestation of his entire submission to the decrees of the Holy See in regard to the controverted subjects of the day. The Duke cordially agreed, and just a week after his election, which took place on August 24th, 1651, he, in conjunction with the Duchess, delivered to M. Olier a formal protestation couched in the plainest and most explicit terms. "We promise," so ran the document, "with the help of God, strictly to adhere to the decisions which the Pope shall clearly and distinctly pronounce on the subject of grace, even though he should condemn all the propositions which we believe to be contained in the doctrine of St. Augustine; our desire being to live and die in the faith of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, never separating ourselves therefrom, or doubting any of the points of faith which it shall teach us. Given at Liancourt this 1st day of September, 1651.—R. Duplessis. Jeanne de Schomberg." To which they appended this postscript:

* For the character of this lady the reader is referred to the *Memoirs of De Retz*, B. 1. p. 17; F. Dalgairns, *Devotion to the Heart of Jesus*, p. 22; and the *Dublin Review*, April, 1874, p. 373.

"We most humbly beg M. l'Abbé Olier to preserve this paper, wherein we have desired to declare to him our true dispositions for his particular satisfaction, and not to allow it to pass into other hands, if such be his good pleasure."

M. Olier received the same assurance from the Hôtel de Nevers, the frequenters of its *salon* unanimously declaring that they were only waiting for Rome to speak in order to give in their unreserved submission; and this, too, was the language held by the Abbé de Bourzeis, the Père Desmares, M. Singlin, and other leaders of the party, being apprehensive of alarming the neophytes who were constantly presenting themselves. From the same motive they made public in 1652 the protestation which the Duc and Duchesse de Liancourt had delivered in private to M. Olier.

Despite, however, all these solemn asseverations the servant of God was not free from disquietude, for the doctrines attributed to St. Augustine were none other than the Jansenistic errors which had been condemned by Urban VIII. in 1642. Seeing, moreover, that under the influence of their favourite divines the Duke and Duchess were becoming more and more attached to these pernicious errors, and that all his endeavours to recall them were of no avail, he suggested their conferring privately with Dom Pierre de St. Joseph, a religious of the Congregation of the Feuillants, who had distinguished himself by his works on the subject of grace. But, the Maréchal de Schomberg being of opinion that a proceeding of a more formal character would have a greater effect in opening his sister's eyes to the real nature of the tenets she affected, it was proposed that a discussion should take place in presence of witnesses on both sides. To this the Duke and Duchess assented, on the condition that the Père Desmares should take part in the debate; and it was mutually agreed that each disputant should be ready to affix his signature to any proposition he advanced, on being required so to do by his opponent.

Accordingly, towards the end of May, 1652, the Duke and Duchess repaired with their champion to the Presbytery of St. Sulpice, accompanied by the Maréchal and Maréchale de Schomberg. With P. Pierre were associated M. Olier, M. Bretonvilliers, and two others. M. Olier opened the conference by putting a question which went straight to the point at issue. "My father," he said, "do you condemn as erroneous and heretical the opinion of those who maintain that there are graces which are sufficient, but which

are not efficacious? In other words, are there, or are there not, sufficient graces given by Jesus Christ, which are rendered inefficacious and inoperative by the ill use that is made of them?" For three hours Desmares used all the artifices of which he was master to evade the question; and, instead of making any reply, entered into a long disquisition on the different systems by which theologians explained the nature of sufficient grace, and, among others, that of Molina, whom he taxed with heresy and Pelagianism. P. Pierre, in his turn, proceeded to show that the system of the latter had never been condemned, and Desmares undertaking, on the other hand, to prove his assertion from St. Augustine, M. Olier, who perceived the object of the subterfuge, interposed, and brought him back to the point. "The question," he said, "is not whether, in order to do good, it is sufficient to have the grace of Molina, or of any other theologian, but whether he who does not do the good which he is commanded to do, has, or may have, all the aid necessary thereto, and whether God, on His part, offers it to him." The Jansenist still persisting in his distinctions and M. Olier continuing to press him for a reply, the Duke and Duchess came to their advocate's assistance, deprecating the attempt to drive him into a corner, on the ground that the term "sufficient grace" was used in different senses by different theologians. M. Olier, therefore, contented himself with asking his opponent whether he held, or did not hold, that there were graces which were not efficacious; and then, as Desmares still declined to answer, he reduced his question to the simplest possible form, and in a single sentence struck at the very root of the new heresy. "Either subscribe," he said, "this proposition, that there is no sufficient grace which is not efficacious, or renounce Jansenius." Instead of replying, Desmares went off into a denial that he had derived his opinions from the writings of Jansenius; and so the disputation ended, as such disputations usually end: the teachers of error departed as they came, —unenlightened and unconverted. Thirty times, and more, Desmares endeavoured to evade making a reply, and then, perceiving (as P. Pierre afterwards said) that, with all his stratagems, he could not induce his opponent to quit his position, "he put up his sword into its sheath,—I mean, he put his books and treatises into his bag;" and the combatants separated. M. de Liancourt instantly took possession of all the notes of the conference which lay on M. Olier's table, and the party did not fail to publish abroad that their

champion had gained a complete victory. The controversy was renewed in writing between P. Pierre and Arnauld; Desmares also sent the former a paper in explanation of the points he had advanced; and we may conceive how great was the interest which the public took in the debate from the fact that hawkers cried about the streets what they called the Père Desmares's "confession of faith." M. Olier, however, was satisfied with having done his duty as pastor of souls, and pursued the matter no further.

Of all M. Olier's opponents, however, the most formidable, as he was personally the most hostile, was M. Henri du Hamel, Curé of St. Merry at Paris, whom, in 1645, the party had brought from the diocese of Sens and placed at the head of that parish for the avowed purpose of making it the rival of St. Sulpice. Here he established regular conferences, in the first instance professedly for the ecclesiastics of his community, but really for the laity, who soon formed the sole audience. The questions discussed were always such as were connected with the subject of grace. The novelty of the proceeding attracted a vast concourse of people, among whom were many persons of rank, and the greatest eagerness and excitement prevailed. Besides the conferences there were catechisings, intended rather for adults than children, as also sermons, which produced no little sensation. Then, too, M. du Hamel became very popular as a director, especially among the ladies of his parish, crowds of whom might be seen waiting to consult him. All this was represented as an extraordinary revival of the fervour, strictness, and purity of primitive times. The Vicaire of Belleville, which was attached to the parish of St. Merry, went so far as to determine to administer the sacrament of baptism only once a year, viz., on Holy Saturday; and taught that immersion was essential to its validity. But the most striking feature in this pretended reform was the restoration of public penance, as practised in the early Church. This system had already been carried out by M. du Hamel in his former parish on true Jansenistic principles. He divided his penitents into four classes. The first consisted of such as were guilty only of secret sins; these, when assisting at the divine office, were ranged in the lower part of the church, at four paces distant from the rest of the congregation. The second was composed of such as had been at variance with their neighbour, but without causing scandal; their place was outside the building, in the porch and vestibule. The third class consisted of such as had committed

scandalous offences, and these were relegated to the churchyard; while those who had indulged long habits of sin were made to occupy an adjacent hill, from which they had a view of the entrance to the church. All these penitents remained barefoot and bareheaded during the celebration of Mass; they also took the discipline in public, wore a hair-shirt, and added other mortifications. These practices, with some slight modifications, were introduced at St. Merry; and in justification of so startling a proceeding it was formally propounded that without previous, and even public, satisfaction sacramental absolution was of no avail.

One of the penances commonly imposed was that of standing at the further end of the church, or outside the door, and never raising the eyes to the Blessed Sacrament; and it is related that a pious young woman, having accidentally looked towards It, immediately ran out into the street for fear of being led to look again and make an act of adoration. But a priest of St. Sulpice, to whom she was brought by her friends, happily succeeded in disabusing her mind of its vain terrors. Another very usual penance was called the hour's tears, from its consisting in making efforts to shed tears, as if of compunction, for that space of time. Then, too, in the early mornings, a strange sight might have been witnessed in one of the chapels of St. Merry—a whole assembly of women scourging themselves with the utmost vigour; so great, indeed, was the ardour and enthusiasm with which they gave themselves to these and similar austerities that several died or went mad from the effects. Some even left their homes, and went to lead a solitary life in wild and desert places. One in particular is mentioned who attired herself in penitential garb and took up her abode near Issy, in a sort of natural grotto that was there, living only on herbs and roots and taking water with her hand from a neighbouring spring. She was venerated as a saint by the devotees of her party, who went frequently to visit and consult her. This eremitical sort of life soon became one of the fashions of the day. The Ducs de Luynes and de Liancourt had each beautiful retreats constructed in the valley of Port Royal des Champs, nine miles from Versailles, to which they retired from time to time, and their example was followed by persons of all classes. They formed a sort of new Thebaid, animated with a malignant spirit of rebellion against the present, living Church of God. Thus, under the plea of reviving primitive piety, the most dangerous novelties in doctrine and in practice were

gradually introduced, to the destruction of all Christian simplicity and genuine devotion. Many of M. Olier's own flock were drawn away, in spite of all his warnings and exertions, and the spirit of disobedience and singularity everywhere excited was productive of the gravest disorders. But that which caused the man of God the deepest grief was the general neglect and infrequency of communion which inevitably resulted from the spread of Jansenistic tenets; in the parish of St. Sulpice alone, the number of those who approached the Holy Table during one year was three thousand less than formerly.

Seeing the credit which these innovations had obtained in high places, through the specious piety and zeal of those who introduced them, M. Olier chose the festival of St. Sulpice, when not only the Regent and her court, but a crowd of prelates, heads of religious Orders, and other distinguished persons were present, to make a solemn protest against the fatal doctrines that were gaining ground. The particular errors he undertook to refute were—1, the necessity of public penance; and, 2, the invalidity of absolution previous to satisfaction, and in the absence of perfect contrition. He showed that the public penance required by the early Church was not of universal obligation; that it was a matter of temporary discipline, the necessity and benefit of which had ceased with the circumstances which rendered it either desirable or suitable.* He added that, if such extraordinary practices were demanded by the age, God would make known His will as He has ever done: first, by raising up men endowed with supernatural gifts and powers; and, secondly, by stamping the practices themselves with the approbation of the Apostolic See. Then, with a holy irony, he said, "I do not know whether in the institution of such unwonted penances these conditions have been observed. I do not know whether all is done in submission to the Holy See, or if the spirit from which they emanate

* "As is always the case when men fall in love with an obsolete discipline, what they reproduced was not even the phantom, but the mere dead body of the past. They sighed for the ancient discipline which the Church found it necessary to establish at a time when men were crowding into it from a pagan world, and had to learn the very first principles of morality; and they forgot the daily communion in the Catacombs, of men and women pursuing their avocations in the midst of the bustle of heathen society. They did not take into account the Blessed Sacrament carried by Christians to their homes, as well as by solitaries into the desert, dwelling with them in their houses, and accompanying them in their travels by land and sea."—Dalgairns, *Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, p. 30.

be not the same which makes men write against it and resist its sacred power. I do not know whether those of whom I speak propound their opinions with the humble surrender of their own lights, or with bitterness and pride. Do we see in their proceedings the spirit of a St. Francis, who desired to be thought a fool, an ignorant man, a poor miserable sinner, nay, the greatest sinner in the world; who was the first to give the example of what he taught, and took pleasure in suffering contempt and insult? Besides, as these penances are for all the world, as is affirmed, it is needful that God approve them by gifts more excellent and miracles more striking than those which confirmed the mission of the founders of religious Orders, seeing that the latter imposed their observances only on certain individuals, and not on the whole body of the faithful." Then, proceeding to the second point, he maintained, in conformity with the doctrine approved by the Council of Trent, and, indeed, expressly taught in the common catechisms, that attrition is sufficient for sacramental absolution. After showing that those words of our Saviour, "*Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish*"* are not to be understood of perfect contrition—which is required for justification apart from the sacrament—he concluded with this encouraging but solemn admonition: "Christians, I ask of you that which our Lord has been pleased to render more easy, namely, sacramental penance. This does not demand of necessity a disposition so pure. Souls that have not perfect charity, having as yet only the principle of love, such as is required of adults to be baptised, receive through the Sacrament of Penance a participation in the perfect charity of Jesus Christ dying for us on the Cross. For this sacrament is a second plank to save from shipwreck. Keep, then, the middle course, and go neither to the one extreme nor to the other, if you would be saved from perishing. There is abuse in the indulgence and facility of many confessors, and there is excess in the rigorism of others. The evil one pretends to drive away abuses, but his object is either to abolish the use of sacraments altogether or to lead men to dangerous extremes, contrary to the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

This discourse irritated the Jansenists to fury, and they strove to weaken its effects by indulging in violent invectives against the preacher. Arnauld, indeed, went so far as to accuse him of having declaimed against the necessity of true repentance, and of having

* St. Luke xiii. 5.

in the heat of his harangue torn in pieces his book on—or, as it might more correctly be called, against—*Frequent Communion.** Desmares also published an anonymous pamphlet, which bore the title of *A Christian and Charitable Remonstrance, addressed to M. Olier*,† but which was distinguished for anything rather than Christian charity. In it the writer asserted that a scandal so public demanded as public a protest, and undertook to show that the Superior of St. Sulpice had sinned mortally by having impugned in the pulpit the doctrine of St. Augustine on the subject of grace, and that of the Fathers generally on penance. He charged him with defaming and persecuting those true servants of God who were not of his opinion, and usurping the authority of the Church, the sole judge of controversies; he declared him guilty of favouring the heresies of Luther and Calvin; and, in fine, of profanation and sacrilege every time he ascended the steps of the altar. But even from this publication we may gather the estimation in which M. Olier was held, and the indubitable marks of sanctity which his life exhibited. The writer concludes by protesting that his sole object is to lead his readers "to conceive a deep compassion for M. Olier, and to humble themselves tremblingly before God, who sometimes permits those who are believed to be saints to fall into thickest darkness, and to pray the Lord to open the eyes of those who place a blind confidence in everything he says, that they may see that the Holy Spirit has not committed to him all the treasures of His wisdom." This pamphlet was widely circulated in Paris, but to all the calumnies it contained M. Olier replied only by silence and patience, leaving to God his justification and defence.

It were wholly to misconceive the nature and import of the Jansenistic heresy to suppose that it involved but a metaphysical error, of no vital consequence; and M. Olier knew well what he was doing when he singled out the doctrine which he made his point of attack in the disputation with Desmares. That doctrine was already bearing fruits most dishonouring to God, and most deadly in its effects on the souls of men. "These innovators," he wrote, "teach that they never do evil except through defect of grace, God withdrawing it from His creature without cause, and

* F. Dalgairns, in his work on *Holy Communion* (P. III, C. II), exposes the true character of Arnauld's book, which when analyzed, presents, as he says, "a complete picture of modern rigorism."

† It is dated February 18th, 1653.

thereby making it to stumble. When we fall, therefore, it is through defect of grace, and not by the abuse of our liberty; and the commandments of God are thus impossible to us. Just conceive what a doctrine this is, and what a pretext it furnishes for the negligent and for libertines! Their mission, they say, is to humble men by instructing them that grace is the principle of everything; as though the whole Church throughout the world did not teach it to her children. And see what kind of humility this is, which makes the sinner, not accuse himself of being the sole cause of the evil he does, but accuse God, as if He did not wish us to do good, the good which He commands us, and to enable us to accomplish which He died upon the Cross and shed every drop of His Blood." This impious doctrine was even imported into the sacred tribunal of penance, and, among other instances, it is related that a person who had violated the most solemn engagements had the audacity to say, in so many words, not that he had sinned, but that grace had been wanting to him on three several occasions.*

These disastrous innovations made their way even into the College of the Sorbonne, where they were maintained in theses without the slightest regard to the corrections made by the censors. Whereupon, M. Cornet, Syndic of the Faculty of Theology, extracted from the *Augustinus* of Jansenius what have since been known as the Five Propositions,† which embody the essential

* In a letter to Mme. de Maure (Anne Doni d'Attichy, cousin of Mlle. Le Gras), Mme. de Choisy describes the practical results of Jansenistic teaching in terms which bear a remarkable resemblance to those of M. Olier. After protesting that the effect of Arnauld's writings and conduct was to unsettle people's minds and favour libertinism and impiety, she continues, "I speak of what I know, seeing as I do how many courtiers and men of the world have broken loose from all restraint since these propositions about grace came into vogue. 'Well,' they argue, 'what does it signify what one does? If we have grace, we shall be saved; and if we have not, we shall be lost.' And then they conclude by saying, 'The whole thing is a pack of nonsense.' Before these questions arose, when Easter came round, they were dumfounded, not knowing what hole to creep into, and full of all sorts of scruples; now they are quite at their ease, and never dream of going to confession, saying, 'What is written is written.' This is what the Jansenists have done for people of the world." Cousin, *Vie de la Marquise de Sablé*, p. 59.

† The full title of this famous work is *Augustinus Sanctus: Doctrina Sancti Augustini de Humanæ Naturæ Sanitate, Ægritudine, Medicina, adversus Pelagianos et Massilienses.* It was published at Louvain in 1640, two years after the death of the author. A summary of its teaching is given in the *Catholic Dictionary* compiled by Addis and Arnold; where also will be found the five condemned Propositions, pp. 465, 466.

articles of the heresy, in order to their being condemned—which, in fact, they were—but, on one of the Doctors, Louis de Saint-Amour, with sixty of his colleagues,* appealing to the Parliament on the ground that the Faculty was exceeding its powers, it was decided to refer the matter to the judgment of the Apostolic See. Accordingly, in 1650, the Bishops of France, to the number of eighty-five, together with several heads of religious houses in Paris, subscribed a joint letter on the subject to the Pope. They were represented at Rome by three divines chosen for the purpose, as was also the Jansenistic party, the Père Desmares being of the number, and, after both sides had been allowed full liberty to expound the doctrines which they severally advocated, Innocent X., on the 31st of May, 1653, issued his Bull *Cum occasione*, which condemned the five propositions, and on the 20th of July it was published in all the parishes of the city, including that of St. Sulpice. M. Olier, it may be observed, had been unable to accompany the three doctors, but he had laboured vigorously to obtain signatures to the letter and, in conjunction with St. Vincent de Paul and M. de Bretonvilliers, had furnished the funds for paying the expenses of their journey and of their residence at Rome.

As strenuous as he was firm in maintaining the integrity of the faith against the innovators, the servant of God was ever most charitable in his judgment of individuals, and moderate in his conduct even towards the party itself. On the publication of the Bull, when the Jansenists were saying to each other that there would be "fireworks" at St. Sulpice, and elsewhere, to celebrate the event, this truly great man was deprecating in his letters to his friends all appearance of triumphing over their opponents. To M. de Bretonvilliers he writes, "My idea would be to do nothing to hurt the feelings of the Jansenists, but to treat them with tenderness and great openness of heart, so as to draw them into union and make them subserve the glory of God and the good of the Church." The Jansenists, as we know, were far from sharing these sentiments, while the course they adopted was neither honest nor sincere. Their doctors had taken with them to Rome a document consisting of three parallel columns, in the first of which was given the purely Calvinistic sense of which, as they declared, the five propositions

* M. Copin, Curé of Vaugirard, was among the Doctors who most warmly opposed the condemnation of the five Propositions. He subsequently became Dean of the Faculty of Theology, and died in 1667, in extreme old age.

were susceptible; in the second, the particular meaning which they themselves attached thereto, and which they asserted to be identical with the tenets of St. Augustine; and in the third, the true Catholic doctrine; and they persisted in maintaining that the Papal Bull was directed only against the version given in the first column, and not against that given in the second, to which they still adhered. Thus they neither submitted nor openly rebelled, but, pretending that the judgment of the Holy See did not touch their propositions, rightly understood, sought by a course of systematic concealment and prevarication to escape the consequences of their condemnation and to propagate their doctrines with impunity.

The party had long desired to avail themselves of some organization, already in existence, by which to undermine the faith of the people with greater secrecy and effect, and but for M. Olier's promptness and energy they would, in all human probability, have gained their end, at least for the time. There existed at Paris a Congregation which bore the name of the Propagation of the Faith; it had been formed in 1632 by P. Hyacinthe, a Capuchin preacher, with the approbation of the Holy See, and had been confirmed by letters patent from the Crown. Its object was the recovery of heretics and the care of new converts; and, as its ramifications were widely extended through the provinces and it enjoyed considerable credit with the public, the Jansenists hoped that, under the protection of M. de Gondy, the Archbishop, on whom it immediately depended and who favoured the party, they should be able to intrench themselves in this association, as in a stronghold from which it would be impossible to dislodge them. Many of them, accordingly, had themselves enrolled among its members, and the conspiracy seemed to be succeeding to admiration, when M. Olier, perceiving their design, resolved to defeat the manœuvre by himself seeking admission into the company, in conjunction with M. Colombel, the Curé of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, a man of like spirit to his own. The Jansenists in vain opposed his election, and all their worst fears were realized. M. Olier was chosen to fill one of the highest offices in the association, and almost the first use he made of his authority was to prevent the admission of two priests who had refused submission to the Papal Bull. The Archbishop supported the candidates, but, on the servant of God addressing himself to the Queen and Cardinal Mazarin, who had now returned to the head of affairs, he reluctantly confirmed the exclusion; and

then, weak man as he was, on the Jansenists representing the prejudice thereby done to his prerogatives, he, six days afterwards, ordered them to be received, together with three others whom he named. More than this: a majority of the association having decided on appointing M. Olier to the post of director, the Archbishop formally opposed the election for special reasons of his own, which he did not think fit to disclose. Whereupon the minority proceeded to an election, and, in direct violation of the laws of the society, nominated the Abbé d'Aubigny for the office, hoping under shelter of his name—for he held the rank of prince at the Court of France—to carry out their intentions without further molestation. They were aware that the Abbé did not share their opinions, but, owing to his having been educated at Port Royal and contracted in consequence affectionate relations with the leaders of the party, he was supposed to regard them with a certain degree of favour; and, moreover, he was known to be dissatisfied with Cardinal Mazarin, and the Court generally, for not espousing the cause of his kinsman, our Charles II. But they were mistaken in their anticipations; for the Abbé, unwilling to identify himself with the innovating party or to occupy a position of implied antagonism to M. Olier, refused to accept the office for which he had been selected.* Nevertheless, the Archbishop confirmed the election,

* That the Abbé d'Aubigny was no Jansenist is plain from the terms he used in conversation with Saint-Evremond, which the latter has reported. They are worth quoting for their own sake, as giving a lively description of the party and its tenets. "Our directors," he said, "trouble themselves little about doctrine; their object is to oppose one society by another, to make themselves a party in the Church, and then of this party to make a cabal at Court. They set about reforming a convent without reforming themselves; they induce people who wish to gain a notoriety by their singularities to live on herbs, while you may see themselves indulging in the choicest viands. These opinions of theirs are always doing violence to nature; they rob religion of all that is consolatory, and put in its place fear, sorrow, and despair. The Jansenists, wishing to make everybody a saint, do not find ten persons in the whole kingdom whom they can turn into such Christians as they would have them to be. Christianity is divine, but they who receive it are men, and, do what you will, you must take humanity into account. A philosophy which is too austere makes few wise men; a policy which is too strict, few good subjects; a religion which is too hard, few religious souls, at least such as long remain so. Nothing is lasting which does not accommodate itself to nature. Grace, of which they talk so much, accommodates itself thereto; God uses the docility of our minds and the tenderness of our hearts in order to have Himself accepted and loved. It is certain that those doctors who are too rigid inspire more aversion for themselves than for

and directed that all the acts of the Congregation should be executed in the Abbé's name. M. Olier and his supporters at once absented themselves from the meetings of the Society, and appealed to the Council of State to cancel the informal election. The Jansenists, on their side, presented a memorial, and Cardinal Mazarin, who was unwilling to offend an association whose officers might be useful in promoting his policy, and who was also on terms of close intimacy with the Abbé de Bourzeis, would fain have let the matter rest; but the Queen was firm, and he found himself compelled to look about for a pretext on which the Archbishop might be induced to comply with the royal pleasure without apparently receding from his own position. As, however, no such expedient offered itself, and the Archbishop would not yield, the Cardinal invented a motive for himself by pretending that the appointment of a foreign prince to be head of a society which exercised so much influence in the country was dangerous to the realm, and forthwith dissolved the Congregation.

After the publication of the Papal Bull, the Duc and Duchesse de Liancourt were, in the first instance, well disposed to submit, but, unhappily, their evil counsellors succeeded in persuading them that the doctrines they held were those of St. Augustine, which the Pope had no intention of condemning; and thus, in spite of their solemn engagements, they allowed themselves to be deceived, and deemed it a point of honour to cling all the more closely to the side they had espoused. Embarrassed, however, by the situation in which he now found himself, the Duke retired into the country, staying one while at his château of La Rocheguyon in the neighbourhood of Mantes and at another at that of Liancourt in the diocese of Beauvais; but, being obliged on occasions to return to Paris, he continued to frequent the church of St. Sulpice. M. Picoté had been his confessor for fifteen or sixteen years, and, presuming that the Duke had accepted *ex animo* the Papal decrees, he had abstained from questioning him on

sin. The penance they preach makes people prefer the facility of continuing in vice to the difficulties they put in the way of getting out of it. The other extreme appears to me equally vicious. If I dislike those morose spirits who make everything to be sin, I dislike none the less those easy, indulgent doctors who see sin in nothing, who favour the disorders of nature, and make themselves secret participators in evil habits. I like enlightened persons, who judge soundly of our actions, who exhort us earnestly to do such as are good and, as much as lies in their power, turn us away from those that are bad. In a word, I am for a Christian morality, neither lax nor austere."

the subject. But, after a while, finding that both he and the Duchess maintained their intimate relations with Port Royal and, in particular, with the Abbé de Bourzeis, M. Picoté began to have scruples as to giving him absolution. Accordingly, on the Duke going to him at the end of January, 1655,* and asking him to hear his confession, as he wished to receive Communion on the feast of the Purification, M. Picoté, good simple man, frankly told him of his difficulty, adding that he felt bound in conscience to take counsel before receiving his confession, but bidding him return either on the eve or on the morning of the festival. The Duke cheerfully acquiesced, but his advisers were differently minded, and induced him to go and make a formal complaint to St. Vincent de Paul, who undertook to confer with the Sulpicians on the matter. From them Vincent ascertained that several of the most learned and experienced doctors of the Sorbonne whom they had consulted had given it as their judgment that the Duke's confessor would not be justified, under the circumstances, in granting him absolution, but that he might be admitted to Communion if he presented himself, inasmuch as he had not been guilty of any public scandal.

The Jansenists were now seized with consternation, thinking that, if a person like the Duc de Liancourt, who occupied so high a position and was so universally esteemed for his piety and charity, were treated with such severity, they could no longer reckon on the security which they had hitherto enjoyed, as, fortified by the example of the priests of St. Sulpice, the other clergy of Paris and, indeed, of the provinces also would adopt similar measures with their penitents. The affair was held to be of such vital importance that M. Arnauld came forward in defence of the Duke, and published *A Letter to a Person of Condition*, in which, while inveighing with the utmost vehemence against M. Olier and his community, he misrepresented all the facts of the case. The delay of absolution became, in his version of the matter, the refusal of Communion; then this supposed refusal of Communion was turned into a positive act of excommunication, and the priests of St. Sulpice were consequently charged with the commission of a mortal sin in having exceeded their legitimate authority and usurped episcopal jurisdiction; and this is the account which the writers of the party continued to give of the occurrence.

* The Duke had resigned his office of churchwarden on September 8th, 1654, or, as is more probable, had not been re-elected on account of his known Jansenistic sentiments.

Many publications appeared on the Catholic side, to which M. Arnauld replied in a second Letter, wherein he denied that the five condemned propositions were contained in the *Augustinus* of Jansenius, and declared that St. Peter had fallen through defect of grace. This second letter was brought before the Sorbonne and formally condemned, and, on his refusing to retract, M. Arnauld was excluded from the Faculty of Doctors. The Duke, despite occasional misgivings, persisted in his contumacy to the last, being attended on his deathbed, as was the Duchess also, by Desmares, who on his return from Rome had ceased to be a member of the Oratory and had taken up his abode at the Duke's château of Liancourt. There he died on the 2nd of January, 1687, never having recanted his errors; but the Abbé de Bourzeis, who resided with the Duke up to the time of M. Olier's death, made a public retractation in the November of 1661, his conversion being largely due to the persistent remonstrances of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

We have given these particulars as an illustration of the vigilance and perseverance which M. Olier displayed in confronting and baffling this insidious heresy at every point, and by which he has deserved the gratitude and veneration of every true Catholic, as he certainly earned for himself the implacable and undying hatred of the Jansenists. Thus, M. Nicole, one of the most moderate of the party, attributed the ruin and discredit of his friends to the intrigues of the Jesuits, and also of "a certain great director and his priests," meaning M. Olier and his community; comparing the former to fiends, and the latter to secondary spirits, or, as he ironically designates them, "angelic souls." M. Olier was ever on the alert, and all his movements were characterised by a quickness and a decision which allowed no time for the evil, when once detected, to gain strength and confidence by delay. Even before Innocent X. had formally pronounced against the new doctrines, he would not allow them to be discussed as though they but represented one side of a controversy between two conflicting schools of theology, both of which were equally tolerated in the Church. They had been condemned by the Bull of Urban VIII. and were therefore to be reprobated. Indifference was implicit heresy, and silence was disloyalty to the Truth of God. "The guilelessness of the true Israelite," he wrote, "does not allow of such suspension of judgment; on the contrary, it ought to make us declare ourselves without waiting for positive injunctions. The children of the Gospel must not practise

such reserve. Silence proceeds from a fear of offending men, and the truth of God is detained in injustice.* The divine doctrine of our Master must be preached on the house-tops." Accordingly, in the Seminary no disputes were permitted which were calculated to introduce division or to foster a spirit of party; all books of a dangerous or equivocal character were proscribed; it was forbidden to hold communication with any who did not avow implicit obedience to the decisions of the Church; and all professions of piety, however specious, were condemned which were not founded on an entire and unreserved submission to the Holy See. It is unnecessary to add that if any had openly declared themselves in favour of the new opinions, whether in the Community or in the Seminary, they would have been instantly expelled.

Writing confidentially, in 1705, to Pope Clement XI., Fénelon, whose moderation and impartiality are incontestable, says that, with the exception of the Society of Jesus and the Seminary of St. Sulpice, all the ecclesiastical bodies throughout France seemed to have become possessed with a spirit of rebellion against the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. He expressly names the two Benedictine communities of St. Maur and St. Vannes, the Augustinians, the Discalced Carmelites, the Dominicans, the Canons Regular of Ste. Geneviève, the Premonstratensians, the Recollects, the Capuchins, the Oratorians; and then he adds these weighty words: "*Soli sunt San-Sulpitiani Seminaristæ quibus cordi sit hanc labem a se depellere. Unde a Cardinale Archiepiscopo viles et invisi habentur*—The Seminarists of St. Sulpice alone are earnest and resolute in expelling this pest from among them. On which account they are become vile and detestable in the estimation of the Cardinal Archbishop." †

* Rom. i. 18.

† Quoted by M. Faillon in a note at the end of Part II. Book X. The Archbishop of Paris to whom Fénelon refers was Cardinal de Noailles, who, with the Bishops of Mirepoix, Montpellier, Boulogne, and Séez, appealed to a future General Council against the Bull *Unigenitus*, by which Clement XI., in 1713, condemned 101 propositions of a Jansenistic nature extracted from the writings of P. Quesnel. He recanted in 1728, shortly before his death.

CHAPTER XII.

M. OLIER'S CONDUCT DURING THE FRONDE.

WE must now retrace our steps, and relate M. Olier's proceedings during the troubles of the Fronde—that abortive Revolution, as it has been aptly called—which desolated Paris and convulsed the whole nation with civil war. Into the details of this memorable contest it does not concern us to enter further than may be necessary to exhibit its formidable character and the part which was taken by the servant of God during those five sad years of confusion and distress. The causes of the outbreak lay deeper than can be explained in few words, but for our present purpose it will be enough to say that it had its origin in the ambitious passions of the nobles, their mutual jealousies, their impatience, as feudal lords, under the supreme dominion of the Crown, and the aversion entertained by all classes for the person of Cardinal Mazarin, who in the name of the Queen Regent ruled the kingdom: by the higher classes because of his arrogance, his foreign extraction, and his paramount influence in affairs of State; by the lower because of the oppressive taxes with which they were burdened and their inability to procure redress for their undoubted grievances; to which must be added, as giving form and unity to the rest, the grave dissensions which had arisen between the Sovereign and the Parliament on questions essentially affecting the prerogatives of the Crown and the powers and privileges of the civil authorities: indeed, it was this alliance with the magistracy which gave a factitious sort of legality to the rebellion and was the mainstay of its vitality and strength. The Fronde, in short, was, in its primary intention, an outbreak against the despotic power of the Crown, but it was an outbreak the chief actors in which—on the part of the *bourgeois* and the Parliament no less than on that of the nobles and *seigneurs*—sought their own particular ends rather than the general weal. The

object for which they contended was the promotion of their respective and rival interests and the maintenance or increase of their exclusive privileges, not the vindication of popular rights or the redress of popular grievances.

The Jansenists availed themselves of the wide-spread disaffection to further their own ends. They knew they had nothing to expect from Mazarin and the Court, but in the event of a Revolution they hoped they might succeed in obtaining a minister who was more favourable to their cause; and, moreover, they believed that disorders in the State would distract attention from their machinations and facilitate the execution of their designs. To those who had the interests of religion at heart they represented—and the representation was, unhappily, but too well founded—that so long as Mazarin was at the head of affairs it were vain to look for any general reform in the Church, as he disposed of abbacies and bishoprics at his sole pleasure without regard either to the personal merits of his nominees or to their fitness for the office, and, certainly, without any view to the correction of abuses or the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline. It was thus that the Duc de Luynes had been gained over to their side and became a prime mover in the revolt, as also the Chevalier de Sévigné, who commanded what was popularly known as the "regiment of Corinth," which was levied by that irrepressible person, the Coadjutor-Archbishop of Paris, whose name is better known as the Cardinal de Retz.* That unscrupulous prelate had no sympathy with the Jansenistic doctrines, but he gave his energetic support to the party because it was hostile to the Court, and especially to Mazarin, who, he considered, had slighted and neglected him—in other words, had not satisfied his cupidity in the matter of prelacies and other ecclesiastical benefices. One of the most active of the agitators was M. du Hamel, the noted Curé of St. Merry, who from early youth had been a disciple of Saint-Cyran; and among his parishioners were two ardent Jansenists, the President de Novion and the Counsellor de Blancmênil, through whose instrumentality he was able to bring all his influence to bear upon the Parliament.

The immediate occasion of the outbreak was the arrest of the three magistrates, Broussel, Blancmênil, and Charton on the 26th of August, 1648, the Day of the Barricades, as it came to be called, when the populace of the capital, secretly encouraged by the Parlia-

* See Additional Notes, No. 4.

ment, rose to arms. By the morning of the 27th more than 200 barricades had been erected in the streets and 100,000 citizens stood fully equipped and prepared to resist the royal troops, or to attack them, if their champions were not liberated. It was observed, however, with surprise that the Faubourg St. Germain preserved its usual tranquillity: not a single barricade was raised in all the quarter; and good men attributed the peaceful attitude of the people to the prayers no less than to the teaching and the influence of the Curé of St. Sulpice, who both in public and in private was indefatigable in inculcating obedience to the royal authority. In the city generally several encounters ensued, in which lives on both sides were sacrificed; the Chancellor, Séguier, was with difficulty rescued from the fury of the mob, two persons who were with him in his carriage being killed. The Parliament, with Matthieu Molé, the President, at its head, went in procession to the Palais Royal, where they had an interview with the Queen, to whom they represented the perilous state of affairs and urged the immediate release of Broussel and his fellow-magistrates, as the only possible means of satisfying the minds of the people. At first she proudly refused to grant their request and quitted the audience-chamber, but afterwards, yielding to the advice of Mazarin, she promised to liberate the prisoners if the Parliament on its part would engage to discontinue its sittings. The members retired to deliberate, but on their appearance in the streets they were greeted with such violent outcries and encountered so much rough treatment at the hands of the enraged multitude, who refused to let them pass the barricades, as having failed in their mission and betrayed the popular cause, that they were compelled to return. Alarmed by the report of the scene that presented itself outside, and profoundly moved by the tears and entreaties of Henrietta Maria, the exiled spouse of Charles I., the Regent at length consented to satisfy the demands of the Parliament and of the people, and, after some ineffectual attempts on the part of the prime movers of the revolt to renew the conflict, the insurgents gradually dispersed, and quiet was, to all appearance, completely restored.

Peace, however, was not of long duration; hostilities between the Court and the Parliament soon broke out afresh, and on January 6th, 1649, a few minutes after midnight, the Queen Regent stealthily left Paris with the young King and, accompanied by all the Princes of the blood royal, retired to St. Germain-en-Laye. There it was

determined to besiege the city, and the Parliament was ordered to remove its sittings to Montargis, but, instead of obeying, that body proceeded to levy troops, and, proclaiming Mazarin a disturber of the public peace and an enemy of the King, called upon him to quit the realm within eight days on pain of being treated as an outlaw if he remained beyond that date. The Prince de Conti, who had left the city with the Court, secretly returned and, offering his services to the Parliament, was, to the great distress of his mother, the Princesse de Condé, appointed Generalissimo of the rebel forces. Other nobles followed his example, and at a meeting of the Jansenistic party, which was held at Port Royal and at which the Ducs de Liancourt and Luynes were present, it was resolved to sell the altar plate and furniture of the Parisian churches in subvention of what was pronounced to be a holy cause. This resolution was, if not proposed, at least warmly approved, by the Coadjutor, who harangued the people with his accustomed eloquence in all the principal pulpits of the city and published an inflammatory pamphlet, which he entitled, *Maxims, Moral and Christian, for quieting Consciences in the present Crisis.*

While both parties were thus preparing themselves for the coming struggle, M. Olier offered himself continually as a victim to the Divine Justice; he multiplied his penances, he was to be seen ever on his knees in prayer, and his countenance and whole demeanour evinced such poignant grief that M. de Bretonvilliers says the sight of him affected him more than any sermon he had ever heard. He never ceased calling on the people to repent and make their peace with God, and instead of accusing each other as the authors of the evils that were hanging over them, to condemn themselves for their sins, which deserved still heavier punishment. With this intention he caused public prayers to be said in the church, and directed such of his ecclesiastics as were labouring in the provinces to unite with him in deprecating the anger of God.

When the troops of the Prince de Condé began to ravage the country and provisions in consequence became scarce in the city, M. Olier, in obedience to a decree of the Parliament, assembled his parishioners and organized a plan of relief for the suffering poor. On inquiry being instituted, no less than 1,400 or 1,500 families were found to be reduced to the last extremity, but the system of visitation he established and, above all, his own charity and zeal were equal to the emergency and, with the help of M. Gibily, a

priest of the Community, better known as the "Confessor of the Poor," with whom he associated Brother John of the Cross, he succeeded in providing both spiritual and temporal aid for all who were in need. The tenderness of his charity was eminently displayed towards the sick, the number of whom was very great; it was the sympathy of friend for friend, or the love of a parent for his child; and his liberality was as inexhaustible as his charity. The necessities of the people increased daily, and at every round he made he commonly expended as much as 2,000 livres. When his purse was emptied, he would give whatever he happened to have about him, as a handkerchief, or a book, or anything that could be sold to buy bread. Application being made to him one day for a certain sum in behalf of a destitute family, he replied that it was not enough, and bestowed three times as much as had been asked. He supplied the poor with victuals, clothes, and tools, and when a more than usually cold winter came to aggravate the general misery, he provided them with necessary fuel. So unalterable was his confidence in God that, when the distress was at its height, he continued to exhibit the same composure and cheerfulness of spirit. One day he was told that there was no more money. "You have no faith," was the reply; "will God desert us?" It so happened, indeed, that at the time the extremity was greatest his resources were at their lowest, for the rich people of his parish, to whom he had been used to look for assistance, had either followed the Court or sought safety in flight; but even thus his charity was at no loss for an expedient. He sold all his private property, and distributed the proceeds among such as were most in want; and when these funds were exhausted, he resolved on going in person to St. Germain-en-Laye in quest of alms.

The adventure was full of peril. On the one hand, the environs were overrun with soldiers, mostly Poles and Germans, who robbed and maltreated, and not unfrequently murdered, those who fell into their hands; and on the other, if his design became known in the city, he might incur the suspicion of being in correspondence with the Court. But this good pastor made no account of his life so that at any risk he could relieve his famishing people. Taking one of his friends, M. de Grandval, into his counsels, he induced him to convey him in his carriage to the furthest limits of the Faubourg; then, watching his opportunity, he quietly alighted, and accompanied by M. le Royer de la Dauversière, the pious layman of

whom mention has been made, succeeded in gaining the open country unobserved. The cold was intense, the snow lay deep on the ground, in places reaching even higher than their knees, and entirely obliterating the by-paths they had to traverse. The Seine, too, had overflowed its banks; but, protected by the hand of God, they escaped the many straggling parties of soldiers they saw about, crossed the bridges, all of which were guarded, passed through the encampment unquestioned, and after much fatigue reached their destination in safety. His friends at the Court were not insensible to the tale of woe he brought them. The Princesse de Condé, in particular, whose elder son was in command of the besieging forces, gave substantial proofs of her compassionate charity; and M. Olier and his companion became the bearers of a large sum of money, with which they returned unnoticed, as though they had been rendered invisible, through the midst of both guards and plunderers. When asked on his return how he had been able to make his way undetected, he replied, "I do not know; all I know is that charity inspires courage."* The alms thus obtained, together with other sums with which Providence supplied him, enabled him to support a vast number of destitute persons until the close of what is known in history as the "First War of Paris." He also obtained from the Vicar-General of the Abbé de St. Germain permission for the poor to eat flesh-meat every day during Lent, Friday excepted, provided it were given them in the way of alms, and a similar dispensation for the faithful generally four days in the week, with leave to use eggs and cheese, the law of fasting and abstinence being still of binding force on all in Holy Week.

During the continuance of hostilities he assembled his people every evening before the Blessed Sacrament to implore the Divine

* St. Vincent de Paul made the same perilous journey on the 13th of January, 1649, with the view of inducing the Queen Regent to dismiss Mazarin, raise the siege, and so bring the civil conflict to a close, but without success. For a detailed description of the sufferings of the people, both in Paris and in the provinces, and the frightful atrocities perpetrated by the soldiery, during the first and second War of Paris, the reader is referred to *La Misère au temps de la Fronde et St. Vincent de Paul*, by Alphonse Feillet, a work compiled from contemporary documents, which has thrown quite a new light on the character of the Fronde and its calamitous effects. In the course of his narrative the writer enumerates the various taxes, duties, exactions, restrictions, privileges, monopolies, as vexatious as they were grievous, to which the tillers of the soil and the lower orders generally were subjected, and which kept them in a state of penury and bondage from which it was impossible for them to emerge.

mercy, opening the door of the tabernacle the more to excite their devotion, and would himself pass whole nights before the altar clothed in sackcloth. At length, on Maundy Thursday, April 1st, 1649, articles of peace, which had previously been signed by both parties, were registered by the Parliament, and on the Monday following a solemn *Te Deum* was sung at Notre Dame in thanksgiving for the event. The same was done at the Abbey of St. Germain, and during three days the shrine of the Saint was exposed for the veneration of the faithful, a boon which had not been accorded for seventy years.

On the 18th of August the young King, with his mother and Mazarin, made his public entrance into Paris amidst exuberant demonstrations of loyalty on the part of the populace, who in dense masses lined the streets. Even Mazarin himself was received with extraordinary tokens of affection and good-will. But, though peace was restored to the capital, the distress of the people still continued, and the servant of God found himself charged with the maintenance of several hundred persons who were unable to procure the means of subsistence. Yet this was the time he chose for the execution of a design which he had long meditated, and which presents us with an instance of his confidence in God which may well excite our admiration: he resigned his abbey of Cercanceau and his two priories of Clisson and Bazainville, thus leaving himself entirely dependent on his cure of St. Sulpice. The resignation was formally executed on Good Friday, the day after articles of peace had been registered by the Parliament. Among other motives which he assigned for the act, was the advantage he had experienced in relying solely on the good Providence of God, who, in a season of great public calamity, had abundantly supplied him with the means of supporting so many destitute families. At the same time he begged pardon of his brethren for the bad example he had given them in retaining his benefices so long. His relatives would fain have had him resign in favour of a nephew, at least in the case of one piece of preferment, but he firmly refused, and recommended to the Pope three persons wholly unconnected with himself, whom he believed to be best fitted to succeed him.*

* He was afterwards induced to resume his two priories, in deference (as we learn from M. Faillon) to the remonstrances of certain great servants of God. In 1650 he resigned that of Clisson to M. Houmain, Abbé de Sainte-Marie, who died March 19th, 1651.

Civil war, however, had brought in its train evils far more afflicting to the servant of God than those of poverty and destitution, which, after all, could but hurt the body; the dissolution of the bonds of society had entailed a great relaxation of morals and an increased indifference to religion, and he at once sought to apply a remedy with all his accustomed energy. As exhortations and warnings, whether public or private, were by many disregarded, he proceeded, with the authority of the Prior of St. Germain, to execute against all who lived in a state of concubinage the provisions of the Council of Trent, which ordered sentence of excommunication to be pronounced against such as, after three consecutive monitions, should persist in their evil courses, with the penalty of being refused burial in consecrated ground; which refusal was to extend likewise to those who, without legitimate excuse, should neglect to make their Easter communion. To these were superadded such punishments as the laws enjoined. But measures of severity, however necessary, were little in accordance with the tender compassionateness of this good pastor's heart, and he procured for his parish the benefit of a general mission, conducted by one whom, for his extraordinary abilities and successes as a preacher, he regarded as the wonder of his age, Père Eudes, founder of the Congregation which bears his name. The mission was announced to begin on the feast of the Purification, 1650, but, owing to the Seine bursting its banks, the Father and the twelve ecclesiastics who accompanied him were unable to reach St. Sulpice in time, and M. Olier himself preached the opening sermon. On their arrival they took up their abode in the Presbytery; and their labours, which were continued during the whole of Lent, not only accomplished the immediate object which M. Olier had at heart, but were productive of two other results, both of which, indeed, he had directly contemplated; viz., a renewal of fervour among the priests of his community, and the establishment of a Company of Charity for the relief of the bashful poor.

To the miseries caused by the late siege of the capital was now added a great dearth of provisions, consequent upon the destructive inundations which occurred in different parts of France. By the overflow of the Loire nearly the whole of the country from Sully to Angers was submerged; the crops were totally destroyed, and multitudes perished from famine. The waters of the Rhone covered the whole of Dauphiné, and did great damage to the bridges at Lyons, St. Esprit, and Avignon. The sufferings of the people, as we learn

from the accounts of the time, were dreadful in the extreme. In St. Sulpice alone there were as many as eight hundred and sixty-six families which had not wherewithal to live; parents lay stretched on wretched pallets, or on the bare floor, with two or three children dead or dying of starvation by their side; others who—to use the touching phrase—had seen better days were discovered, in rags which scarcely covered their nakedness, cowering in attics or in cellars, unable to stir out in the face of day, even to hear Mass. In the quarter of the Incurables persons were found who had not tasted food for days together. Some contrived to support life with a little bran soaked in water in which a morsel of cod-fish had been boiled, or with such carrion as they had been able to pick up in the streets or outside the city walls. Infants died at the breast from lack of nourishment. In fine, some in a fit of frenzy and despair, produced by hunger and the sight of those they loved perishing around them, attempted self-destruction by suspending themselves from the rafters of their rooms. For the removal of this frightful destitution, and the prevention of similar distress, M. Olier determined to organize a permanent system of relief; and he looked to that renewal of piety which a mission would produce for the means to carry his design into effect. The result corresponded with his expectations. But in this, as ever, he acted with deliberation, and, above all, with entire submission to the will of God. After long-continued prayer, he communicated his design in the first instance to a chosen few, and, having secured their zealous co-operation, he called a general meeting of the parishioners on Easter Monday, 1651. It was attended by persons of all classes; and, after representing in detail the miseries of those whom modesty or shame deterred from obtruding their sufferings on their neighbours' sight, he reminded them that alms-giving had its particular as well as its general obligations, and bade them, at such a time of extreme necessity, retrench their superfluities and deprive themselves of what, under ordinary circumstances, they might innocently retain; exhorting those who had nothing else to bestow to give their time, and, what was more acceptable even than alms, their personal care and active sympathy. God so blessed his words that a large sum of money was contributed on the spot, many engaged to give a certain sum each month, and, among all who were present, there was not one who did not promise his assistance according to his ability.

He now divided the parish into seven districts, putting four

persons in charge of each, whose business it should be to inform themselves of the condition, character, and circumstances of those who were the objects of their solicitude. As a great number of these poor people were unwilling to make personal application for relief, he set up a box at the entrance of the Presbytery into which they could put their requests in writing. The greatest care was taken that none but deserving persons should be recipients of this bounty, from which professional beggars also were rigidly excluded. M. Olier discouraged the giving of money in these cases, and the Company accordingly established a depôt, from which not only food and clothing, but furniture, tools, and every necessary article were provided. On the last Sunday in every month a meeting of all the members was held, at which each gave in his account, and at the beginning of winter a general visitation of the whole parish was made, and again at its close. Schools were at the same time opened for the children of the poor who were thus relieved, which were inspected at short intervals by those who had the charge of the several districts; an ecclesiastic also went at regular times to give them religious instruction; which, however, did not dispense their habitual teachers from doing the same, especially on all Sundays and holidays. A Catechism was published, under M. Olier's direction, for their especial use, in which the chief points of doctrine were expounded in simple and familiar terms, and short forms of prayer added for all the common actions of each day. This Company * became the model of similar associations in other parishes, and, indeed, was the first of those brotherhoods of Christian charity for which the city of Paris has been so honourably distinguished. Its members were also charged with the support of an orphanage, which M. Olier had commenced in the year 1648 for boys, who, at a fitting age, were apprenticed to various trades. Two of his parishioners, brothers, afterwards presented him with a house in the Rue de Grenelle for female orphans, who were superintended and instructed gratuitously by charitable women residing with them; but, the distance from St. Sulpice proving inconvenient, they were subsequently transferred to the Rue du Petit Bourbon by Mme. de L'Esturgeon, who generously gave up her own house for their reception. This establishment existed at the time of the Revolution.

There was yet another association which deserves especial men-

* It was indulgenced by the Holy See, March 7th, 1654, under the title, *Pauperum Infirmorum Verecundorum.*

tion. This was the Council of Charity, composed of persons versed in the law and affairs of business, who lent their assistance in preventing litigation among the humble classes, and in conducting the causes of those who were unhappily compelled to seek legal redress. For this charitable work Providence assigned him a most valuable coadjutor in the person of one of the priests of his community, Antoine Jacmé de Gaches, a man of great piety and austerity of life, who had been a member of the provincial magistracy, and whose acquaintance he had made during his missions in Auvergne and Le Velay. As acute as he was prudent, he was endowed with a remarkable gift of persuasion, and by his intervention many differences were amicably adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties, which otherwise might have entailed ruinous legal proceedings.

This account of M. Olier's charitable labours has carried us beyond the date at which the narrative had properly arrived, and to which we here return. On the 18th of January, 1650, the Prince de Condé, whose pretensions grew every day more exacting and whose influence with the army alarmed the Court, was arrested by the orders of Cardinal Mazarin and, with his brother, the Prince de Conti, and his brother-in-law, the Duc de Longueville, conveyed to the fortress of Vincennes. By order of the Queen, the Princess, his mother, retired with her daughter-in-law * to Chantilly, whither M. Olier, compassionating her sorrow and desolation, went, in the capacity of her director, to support and console her. Some of the persons, however, who were about her, jealous of the confidence she reposed in him, had laboured to excite suspicions to his prejudice, which, in her then embittered state of feeling, she was but too well disposed to entertain, and he consequently found himself very coldly received. Nothing disconcerted by a change so unexpected, he discharged his spiritual office with that consummate prudence which never failed him; and on his return to Paris, so far from complaining of the little regard that had been shown him, he made it matter of thankfulness to God, who (as he wrote to a friend) would

* Claire-Clémence de Maillé-Brézé, niece of Cardinal de Richelieu, married February 9th, 1641, to the Duc d'Enghien. She was a person of considerable energy and spirit, as after-events proved, but she was short of stature, and Mlle. de Montpensier, in her *Mémoires*, says that at the ball which the Cardinal gave on the occasion of the marriage she had such high heels to her shoes that she tripped and fell, while dancing, to the amusement of the whole Court, including her husband. Quoted by the Comte de Bonneau-Avenant in his *Duchesse d'Aiguillon*, p. 275. The marriage did not prove a happy one.

teach His poor servants how little they ought to depend on creatures, and so constrain them the more to put their whole trust in Him alone.

Apprehensive that her presence in the capital would lead to some popular movement in behalf of the Princes, whose party was gaining strength every day, the Court stationed troops to prevent her leaving Chantilly; but, in spite of these precautions, she succeeded, on the night of the 16th of April, in eluding the vigilance of the guards, and, after remaining for some days concealed in Paris, presented herself before the Parliament, and by her tears and supplications endeavoured to move the assembly in favour of her sons. The counter-influence of the Duke of Orleans, however, was exerted with such effect that she was obliged to leave the city, to the great regret of the inhabitants of St. Sulpice, and especially of the poor, of whom (as we have had occasion to see) she was the munificent benefactress. But in her exile the Princess did not forget that she was one of M. Olier's parishioners. On the 20th of May she sent some rich ornaments of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold and silver, for the decoration of the church; and a letter, which he wrote in acknowledgment of this act of devotion, led to a renewal of those confidential relations which had been the source of so much profit to her. A day was near at hand when she would need, if ever, the assistance and prayers of her saintly pastor. Her sons, instead of being released, were transferred to a place of greater security; and, sick and well-nigh broken-hearted, the unhappy lady obtained permission to retire to Châtillon-sur-Loing, a village twelve miles from Montargis, where, sensible that her end was approaching, she sent for M. Olier to prepare her soul for its final passage. Here, in fact, she expired, on the 2nd of December, 1650, in the holiest dispositions. She bequeathed 10,000 livres towards constructing the new church of St. Sulpice, having contributed the same sum each year since the works had begun.

Mme. de Motteville, who was with the Princess during her last hours, thus speaks of her in her *Mémoires*:—"No doubt it pleased God to humble her before she died, in order to prevent her with His graces and render her death more truly Christian. Except for this divine aid, her temperament was such that she would have evinced great impatience in seeing herself an exile, her sons in prison, and her enemies triumphing over her; but God changed these sentiments into most virtuous dispositions. She seemed to

accept willingly all these afflictions, that by this cross she might have a participation in that of our Lord. She commissioned the Abbé de la Roquette to go on her behalf to the Queen, and assure her that she died her most humble servant, although her death was caused by all she had suffered on account of the wrongs done to her children. She bade him say that she conjured her by the Blood of Jesus Christ to be mindful of death, and remember that no one was exempt from the strokes of fortune. In fine, when she was in her agony, turning towards Mme. de Brienne, who was a relative of hers, and stretching out her hand to her, she said, 'My dear friend, tell that poor unhappy creature at Stenay'—meaning Mme. de Longueville, her daughter—'the state you see me in, and bid her learn to die.'" M. Olier, in a letter written a few days after her death, uses very similar language regarding his penitent.

The Princesse de Condé had died in disgrace with the Court, her sons were in prison, and the other members of her family had been ordered to retire to their estates; but, like the clergy generally, who, while interceding for the liberation of the Princes, held themselves aloof from either political party, M. Olier preserved a noble independence, and celebrated a solemn Requiem Mass for the repose of her soul in the presence of his whole community and a large assemblage of the people. The Court, to its honour be it recorded, far from showing resentment, respected the motives of this worthy pastor; and on Christmas Day the young monarch came in state to hear Mass at St. Sulpice, accompanied by his brother, the Duc d'Anjou, and his uncle, the Duc d'Orléans, and was received at the entrance of the church by M. Olier himself, who delivered an appropriate address; the sermon was preached by M. Joly. He afterwards assisted at Vespers. Louis XIV., even in his worst days and in spite of his personal immorality, exhibited a religious disposition, but in his early youth he seems to have given marks of genuine piety. It was the anniversary of his first communion, which he had made in the previous year, and which he desired thus to commemorate; and it is with a melancholy interest we read that on this occasion he edified the congregation by his unaffected modesty and devotion.

All this time civil war had been raging in the provinces, especially in Guienne, the young Princesse de Condé having taken refuge at Bordeaux, with her son the Duc d'Enghien, still a boy, and raised the standard of revolt against the royal authority or, as her manifesto

worded it, against the tyranny and violence of Cardinal Mazarin. This "rebellion of the Princes," as it was called, was at length quelled—at least for the time—by large concessions on the part of the Crown, alarmed by the successes of the Vicomte de Turenne, whom an infatuated passion for Mme. de Longueville had led to identify himself with the cause of her brothers, and who, with an army composed of French and Spanish troops, was rapidly advancing with the intention of delivering them from prison. The Princes were hastily removed from Vincennes to the Château de Marcoussis, only eighteen miles from Paris, and thence, by Mazarin's orders, to the more distant fortress of Havre; and Turenne, unable to effect his purpose, retired.

The popularity of the Prince de Condé was every day increasing, while the hatred of the citizens against Cardinal Mazarin became proportionably deep and violent. In the February of 1651 the party opposed to the Court received a powerful accession in the person of the Duc d'Orléans, who was won over to its side by the persuasions of the Coadjutor, the Parliament declared in his favour, and Mazarin left Paris in disguise. Proceeding to Havre, he visited the prisoners and set them free, hoping thus to conciliate their good will, or, at least, to disarm their resentment. Liberated from confinement, the Princes made their triumphal entrance into the capital amidst the acclamations of the multitude; the Court itself went out to meet them at St. Denis, and escorted them to the Palais Royal, where they were admitted to an audience by the young King and his mother. But the reconciliation thus ostentatiously paraded was in reality only apparent; and the Queen Mother, deprived of the support of her favourite minister, and obliged to entrust the conduct of affairs to persons for whom she entertained neither esteem nor confidence,—aware, too, of the unconcealed hostility of nearly all the Parliaments in the kingdom, the ceaseless caballings of the nobles, and the universal exasperation of the people against her,—sent for M. Olier to obtain his counsel and assistance. Something of the nature of the advice he gave her may be gathered from a letter still extant which he addressed to her at the time, and in which, with a holy freedom, he represented the dishonour that had been done to God, and the evils that had accrued to the Church and to religion, by the unworthy conduct of the Cardinal,* who

* Cardinal Mazarin, it should be observed, although he had received the clerical tonsure, was not in holy orders. Besides conferring bishoprics and rich

had disposed of the highest ecclesiastical dignities, and especially of bishoprics, to persons whose only qualification was the having rendered some service to the State. This unscrupulous minister, though bound to act in conjunction with the Council of Conscience, had eluded the obligation, on the pretext of other and more urgent business, and, in fact, had made the appointments by his own sole authority. The letter is so characteristic of the man, and so illustrative of the influence he exercised in the highest quarters, that we give it at length.

"Madame,—The confidence which your Majesty lately reposed in me by avowing to me that you had not made all the use you ought to have made of the adversities which God sends you, has induced me to write to you. In taking this liberty, I rely on the goodness which has hitherto led you graciously to receive the things which I have said, in the sincerity of my heart, for your personal profit and, above all, for that of your soul, the salvation of which I have always most earnestly desired.

"Submit yourself, Madame, to the justice of God, seeing yourself deprived of the person whom He had given you and in whom you placed your confidence. Providence, which permitted his being taken from you, has herein had motives and reasons unknown to men. We must adore them in faith, amidst the troubles and perplexities of life. This is the assured stay and haven of Christians in the storms and tempests of this world; let it be yours also, Madame, and the sure foundation on which your mind may rest. Adore, then, the eternal and infinite reasons of God's dispensation; and expect from this event, which He has ordained, some issue favourable to His glory and the good of your soul.

"Madame, the mercy of God is manifested towards you even in this decree of His justice. He desires to purify your soul more and more; to the end that, by renewing it in the first fervour of its love, it may be able to bear more fruit. Consider those words which our Lord, in the Scriptures, addresses to a bishop, as to a spiritual monarch in the kingdom of His Church. Desiring to reproach him for the tepidity of his heart and the chilling of his first love, He said to him, 'I will come and overthrow thy kingdom, unless thou

abbacies on his creatures, he had appropriated to himself the revenues of the see of Metz and more than thirty benefices of great value. At length, unable to overcome the inflexible integrity of Vincent de Paul, he abolished the Council of Conscience, and the Queen was able to consult her saintly adviser only in private.

humble thyself; bethink thee, and do penance, and renew the works which thou didst when thou enteredst upon thy charge.'* This reproach, so severe and yet so full of mercy, strengthened him in his duty and upheld him in his sovereignty. Madame, renew your spirit of devotion to the royalty of our Lord, who ought to live in you, so that God may reign over your kingdom in all that depends upon you. Renew, then, the first fervour with which you commenced your holy regency; for you entered upon it with an ardent zeal and desire that God should reign in His Church, and to defend all His interests with a marvellous courage. You adopted excellent measures for the collation of benefices and, especially, for the nomination to bishoprics, in order to bestow them on the most worthy in your kingdom, as you were bound in conscience to do. God, Madame, has seen that this was no longer done, for you left them to be disposed of by that person, who had neither the zeal nor the fortitude which was necessary for resisting solicitations and importunities: an abuse which has caused the kingdom of God an injury the greatness of which you will know only on the day of judgment, including the loss of a multitude of souls, the least of which is of more value than a whole kingdom and a whole material world; an injury to which it is, perhaps, impossible for you to apply a remedy. Madame, it is simony to bestow benefices on children in recompense for services which their fathers have rendered to the State. The end which God proposes in calling men to these dignities is that He may be honoured and served in His Church by faithful ministers, zealous for His glory and for the salvation of souls; and, in conferring them on His behalf, you ought to have no other. Acknowledge, Madame, the mercy of God in your regard. You placed your confidence in your minister, in order to relieve yourself of the painful cares of State and of the conduct of important affairs; but, as the cause of God and of the Church suffered thereby, and your soul remained charged with that unworthy collation of abbeys and bishoprics, God deprived you of the stay on which you rested, the person who dispensed them in your name, that your eyes might be opened in respect to an obligation so momentous. He desired to remove from you that hindrance to your salvation, and to give you anew the means of beginning to serve Him by promoting the welfare and the sanctification of your kingdom by means of nominations in accordance with His will.

* Comp. Apoc. ii. 4, 5.

"Bear, then, Madame, with love and with joy the banishment of your minister. Thank God for not permitting your soul to be any longer implicated, as was the case every day, in repeated derelictions, wherewith it was woefully burdened, albeit through another's fault. Bear this adversity, first, to satisfy your obligation, and, next, to repair, as much as you are able, so many nominations which were not weighed in the scales of the sanctuary. And yet thereon depend the honour of God in His Church, the salvation of numerous souls, and, in particular, Madame, the eternal happiness or misery of your own. No longer, then, depend on a person who may imperil your salvation. Do not discharge yourself of the momentous duty of conferring benefices by delegating it to others; examine well the possible recipients, availing yourself of the lights which are furnished you by the servants of God; obtain from them accurate information as to the worthiest ecclesiastics in your kingdom; let these be the men you destine for promotion; by thus anticipating the demise of bishops you will forestall the importunities of courtiers. To these you ought never to yield, seeing it is not lawful for you to incur the risk of endangering your salvation, and that of so many other souls, and, above all, of doing dishonour to God. On this point remain inflexible, and do not relax for any human consideration whatever, for such before God is always null. Moreover, in reward for your fidelity to His service, He will know well how to repair any ill consequences which your just refusal might entail. If you are faithful in upholding His kingdom, which is the Church, and never allow it to be shorn of its splendour, He will be vigilant in maintaining your own. My profession does not permit me to apply myself to the consideration of worldly things, and therefore I speak to you only of grave defalcations of duty in respect to the clergy. The grief and affliction we suffer make us languish and faint even to death; and this it is which induces me to take the liberty of speaking to you in all sincerity, as I believe you really desire. I am confident that you will permit your servant and subject to make his plaints and pour out his sorrows at your feet, imploring that God may be glorified throughout your realm, and, above all, in the heart of the Queen, seeing it is His desire to reign in her and, through her, in all her subjects."

The Queen took the remonstrance in good part, acknowledged her error, and promised for the future not to dispose of a single

bishopric without first privately consulting St. Vincent de Paul, an engagement to which she conscientiously adhered.

The rupture between Condé and the Court was not slow in declaring itself. The Prince left the city and, betaking himself to Bordeaux, made a disgraceful compact with Spain and began to levy troops against his sovereign. In this emergency, Anne of Austria, regarding her son, who was still but thirteen years of age, as unfit to hold the helm of government, although his majority had been declared, withdrew from Paris and took immediate measures for the Cardinal's recall. This was the signal for that renewal of civil strife to which has been given the name of the "Second War of Paris." In December, 1651, the Parliament set a price on Mazarin's head, and the coalition against him soon became general throughout the realm; he succeeded, however, in penetrating as far as Poitiers, where the Court then was, at the head of more than eight thousand men, and resumed the conduct of affairs. The Duke of Orleans, entering into a league with Condé, sent troops to dispute the Cardinal's farther advance. The Jansenists, hoping to profit by the disorders into which the realm would be plunged by civil war, offered to raise 10,000 men at their own expense and place them at the disposal of the Duke. After a series of conflicts, with varying fortunes, which on the whole were to the advantage of the royal cause, the young King, with his mother and Mazarin, was safely conducted, under the protection of the Vicomte de Turenne, to the environs of Paris. The Princes now, in full Parliament, engaged to lay down their arms on condition that Mazarin were dismissed; but these propositions were rejected by the Court, and war with all its horrors again approached the capital. An outbreak of the plague intensified the misery and terror of the people. The shops were shut and all business was suspended; the dearth of provisions became an actual famine; workmen were everywhere succumbing to sheer starvation; in the faubourgs alone 12,000 families of the class we should call respectable were perishing of hunger, while of the destitute poor the number was reckoned at 100,000. M. Olier, seeing all his resources exhausted, applied to the Queen for succour, which was liberally granted. But there was another and a new cause of affliction which pressed heavily on the pastor's heart: the Calvinists, taking advantage of the intestine divisions, began to excite commotions; every day the situation of affairs became more alarming; hordes of malefactors, let loose from prison

and taken into pay by the Duke of Orleans and others, insulted and maltreated the magistracy; anarchy and terror reigned in the city; the Parliament itself was threatened by the insurgents, for, although the majority of the members still held out against the Court and persisted in demanding the dismissal of the obnoxious minister, they were strenuously opposed to the traitorous designs of Condé and the rest, and were consequently regarded with little favour by the more violent spirits among the populace. Under these circumstances, M. Olier wrote to the Queen Mother, adjuring her in the name of religion and of the public weal to yield to the counsels of her best and sagest advisers, by sacrificing her private preferences and once more obliging Cardinal Mazarin to leave the kingdom. Had she adopted the advice contained in this letter, which was a model of that bold but respectful liberty which churchmen ought to use in addressing princes, she would have spared her people many terrible woes. Unhappily, she was induced to temporize, until she found herself compelled perforce to an act which at this juncture she might have accorded with a prudent and gracious condescension.

Into the details of the lamentable struggle that followed we need not enter. On July 2nd, 1652, Condé and Turenne, the two great captains of the age, encountered each other under the walls of Paris, and in the sight of Louis and Mazarin, who watched every turn of the battle from the heights of Charonne. The contest was long and furious; at length victory was declaring itself on the side of Turenne, whose forces were far superior in number to those of his adversary, when, by the orders of Mlle. de Montpensier, the daughter of the Duke of Orleans—it was even said that it was her own hand applied the match—the guns of the Bastille suddenly opened their fire upon the royal troops, the gate of St. Antoine was unbarred, and Condé made good his entrance into the city, his soldiers sweeping through the streets out into the Pré-aux-Clercs and pillaging all the villages for ten miles round. Violent dissensions soon arose between the Princes and the civil authorities, who had refused the rebel army admittance into Paris and had yielded only to the menaces of the populace; the citizens also were divided, the lowest of the rabble taking part with Orléans and Condé; the Hôtel de Ville was attacked and burned; many of the magistracy fell victims to the popular fury; for one whole night the city was in the possession of an armed mob; numbers of the inhabitants were massacred, others sought refuge in the royal camp.

When tidings of these murderous outrages reached the provinces a feeling of consternation pervaded all classes, and a general reaction set in; town after town made its submission to the King; the Parliament was ordered to meet at Pontoise, to which town the Court had retired; some of the members at once obeyed the summons, more followed, and the rest, with Matthieu Molé at their head, opened negotiations with the Government; a powerful party was formed anxious for peace; the Queen Mother at length resigned herself to the inevitable, and on the 19th of August Mazarin again took his departure for a season. The Princes, finding themselves deserted by their partisans and exposed to the violence of their own troops, whom they were powerless to control, stipulated only for a full and complete amnesty for themselves and their followers; the Court removed to Compiègne, where, on September 12th, a deputation of the clergy, secular and regular, with the Coadjutor as their spokesman, was admitted to audience; other deputations followed, but were either coldly received or denied admittance; no formal amnesty was granted, but the King entered into a general engagement not to call the citizens to account for their conduct during the rebellion; whereupon they made an unconditional surrender, and on the 21st of October, 1652, Louis XIV. re-entered his capital amid demonstrations of loyalty even greater than had greeted him at the close of the former war.

From these scenes of blood and crime it is a relief to turn once more to the exertions made by one good man to remedy the frightful evils of the time. The measures adopted by M. Olier for the relief of his suffering people have in substance been already recounted, but there are still two charitable institutions of which no mention has been made. One day, in the course of his pastoral visits, he was accosted by a country girl, who besought his charity. She had come to Paris for protection from the violence of the soldiery, and to obtain the means of subsistence. Touched with compassion at her desolate condition, one, too, fraught with so much peril, he resolved on the instant to open an asylum for young females similarly circumstanced. Those to whom he communicated his design represented to him in vain the difficulty of accomplishing such a task at such a time, and the great expense it would entail. He answered simply, "The purse of Jesus Christ is inexhaustible to all that put their trust in Him; we have only to begin, He will help us." Accordingly he hired a house, and directed Brother John of the Cross to

furnish it forthwith. There he lodged, clothed, and fed no less than two hundred poor country-girls, as long as the troubles lasted; and, not confining his solicitude to their temporal necessities, he provided them with the benefit of a regular retreat, during which they were instructed in their religious duties and prepared for confession and communion. But there were other hapless fugitives, whom the dread of a lawless soldiery had driven from their peaceful seclusion to a crowded capital. These were nuns from several of the convents in the environs of the city and the adjoining districts, great numbers of whom, homeless and friendless, were to be seen wandering through the streets and asking alms of the passers-by. For these, the objects of the tenderest pity of every Catholic heart, the pure spouses of Jesus Christ, he also opened an asylum in a large and commodious house provided with a garden. There all such as pleased to enter kept strict enclosure, fulfilling all the requirements of a community life; and, although they belonged to seven or eight different Orders, they all conformed to one rule, under a superioress who was invested by the Prior of St. Germain with the necessary powers. Their temporary association was inaugurated with a course of spiritual exercises, M. Olier assigning them preachers and directors from among the priests of his community, and a chaplain to say Mass for them every day. For four months these poor religious were indebted to the Curé of St. Sulpice for the means, not only of living according to the spirit of their holy vocation, but of advancing in perfection; and, when peace was concluded, they received from the same fatherly hands whatever was requisite for enabling them to return each to her proper convent.

Not content with accepting, in humble submission to the Divine will, the contradictions and afflictions inseparable from the exercise of his pastoral office in such times, the servant of God imposed upon himself the severest austerities, making his life one continued act of mortification and penance. With permission of his director, P. Bataille, he wore a rough hair-shirt, which occasioned him much suffering, and, when the insurrection was at its height and Paris was in rebellion against the King, quitting the Presbytery at nightfall, or in the early morning before the inhabitants had left their beds, he would pace the streets of the city and of the Faubourg, kneeling at times before the doors of the churches or in the open roadway, and, in union with the many weary journeys Jesus made on earth and His long nights spent in prayer, implore the Father of Mercies to

calm the minds of men and touch their hearts. Often, too, during the day he would visit the churches of Paris and of the environs—St. Denis, St. Maur, Charenton, Mont Valérien—and pray that the graces which God desired to pour down upon the people might not be arrested and turned aside by their hardness and impenitence. The heavier were the chastisements which God in His loving-kindness laid upon His rebellious children, the more zealously did His servant labour to make them humble themselves under His mighty hand. "The decrees of Heaven," he said, "must needs be accomplished in all their rigour; it is for us to do penance for our sins, to deplore our offences and those of Paris, menaced, as is the whole realm, with the scourges of the Divine wrath, which it has so long merited." Deeply affected by the perils which encompassed the young King, he begged God to change the hearts of the royal princes and the magistrates, and of all who were fomenting discord in the State. With this intention he went frequently to offer the Holy Sacrifice at Notre Dame, as being the principal church of the Patroness of France; at St. Germain l'Auxerrois, because it was the King's own parish; and at the Sainte-Chapelle, which he regarded as the church of the Parliament of Paris. In this last church he would spend long hours in earnest supplication, begging God to enlighten the councils of that judicial body and rekindle in its members sentiments of loyalty and obedience to the supreme authority. In fine, he obtained permission from the Prior of St. Germain to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed at St. Sulpice on several occasions, when he not only invited persons of all classes to join in acts of worship and reparation, which they did in great numbers, but directed that four of the seminarists should always be present as adorers, others taking their places, hour after hour, by night as well as by day.

Here we may mention a marvellous incident which M. de Bretonvilliers has recorded in his Life of this great servant of God. In the month of January, 1649 (he says), M. Olier, for some unexplained cause, intermitted for two days his accustomed acts of intercession, when the Blessed Virgin appeared to him with a countenance that betokened displeasure, and, reproving him for his indifference and remissness, bade him quicken his fervour and continue his supplications, which accordingly he did, after imploring her to forgive his negligence. In all this, says his biographer, we may recognise the influence which this pastor of souls possessed with the Divine Son, seeing that His Blessed Mother chose him to

help with her in arresting His avenging arm. But others were helping likewise, for the efforts which M. Olier had made to change the hearts of his people had prepared them to make good use of the chastisements of Heaven. They accepted them in a true spirit of penance and with a generous submission to the Divine behests. The miseries consequent on the second war were even greater than those of the first, for many had parted well-nigh with all they possessed and in their destitution were exposed to all the rigours of absolute penury and famine. Moved to compassion by their pitiable condition, this good pastor bade them make a merit of their forced abstinence by enduring it with patience and in a genuine spirit of compunction, offering their privations to God in reparation for the excesses in which they had previously indulged; and, in particular, he exhorted the women to discern in the want even of necessary clothing from which they were now suffering the just punishment of the sins they had committed by their vanity, extravagance, and immodesty in dress. These truly Christian exhortations had the desired effect; a spirit of penance took possession of all classes; the terrible disasters they had undergone were thus changed into blessings; the pride of the nobles was humbled; the people repented of their violence; disorder ceased; the Parliament (as we have seen) returned to its allegiance; and peace was re-established throughout the realm.

During the civil commotions, when minds were most inflamed and no prospect of quiet being restored as yet appeared, the Queen Mother had requested M. Picoté, whom she held in the highest respect, to vow in her name some work of piety which he should deem best suited to satisfy the Divine justice; and, as the one thought which most touched and grieved his heart was that of the profanation of churches and holy places, and, above all, of the Holy Eucharist, he came to the resolution of establishing a religious house especially dedicated to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the reparation of the outrages of which It was the object. There is every reason to believe that she made a similar request of M. Olier; this, at least, is certain, that he drew up for the Queen the form of a vow to the archangel St. Michael, protector of France, in which she engaged to erect an altar to his honour, where, on the first Tuesday in every month, High Mass should be celebrated, at which she would herself assist whenever affairs of State permitted. This vow remained unknown, but the resolution which

M. Picoté had formed was soon noised abroad, and to it was commonly attributed the favourable change which took place at this crisis in the position of the adverse parties. Peace was no sooner restored than the royal vow was faithfully fulfilled. On the 8th of December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1652, the Queen having come to the Abbey of Val de Grace, M. Picoté profited by the occasion to inform her of the vow which he had made on her behalf, and at the same time proposed that certain Benedictine nuns who had fled to Paris for safety should be chosen to carry it into execution. The Queen at once assented, and they were accordingly established in a house in the Rue Férou, where, under the government of Catherine de Bar, better known as the Venerable Mère Mechtilde du Saint-Sacrement, they took the name of Filles du Saint-Sacrement, and commenced their perpetual adoration. The Queen herself assisted at the ceremony of their installation, bearing a lighted taper, and was the first to make an act of public reparation to Jesus in the Sacrament of His Love. This institution contributed greatly to an increase of devotion to the Mystery of the Altar in the parish of St. Sulpice, as also to the Blessed Virgin, under whose particular patronage the religious placed themselves, and became the parent of similar establishments in various parts of France.

In connection with this subject may here be mentioned another instance of M. Olier's charitable exertions. It was at the close of the First War of Paris that the celebrated Mère Madeleine de la Trinité succeeded, with his aid, in founding a house of her Order at Paris. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon had provided the necessary funds for the purpose, but, despairing of obtaining the permission of the Cardinal de Sainte-Cécile, Archbishop of Aix,* for the nuns

* He was the brother of Cardinal Mazarin, and, though the royal authority had been put in requisition in order to obtain his consent, he persisted in withholding it, and assured the nuns that nothing should ever induce him to recede from his resolution. They reminded him that it was not in the power of creatures to thwart the designs of God, and that, if God were so minded, He would take him to Himself, and so end his opposition. To which the Archbishop rejoined with a smile, "Thank God, I am in good health, and still a young man. If you are not to establish yourselves at Paris till I am dead, I hope it will be some time first." Shortly after he left for Rome, and M. Olier again availed himself of the same powerful influence in the hope of obtaining from the Grand-Vicar the necessary authorization. On the very day the Queen's despatch arrived at Aix tidings reached that city that the Archbishop was dead, and the Grand-Vicar at once accorded the desired permission.

to leave that city, she had bestowed the money upon the Carmelite convent, and, on arriving in Paris, they found themselves entirely dependent on the bounty of Mme. de Bouteville, a parishioner of St. Sulpice. This pious lady gave up to them two rooms in her own house; but it was the very eve of the civil war, the Queen, who had interested herself in their behalf, left Paris, and amidst the alarms and anxieties of the time Mme. de Bouteville, who had an only son in the rebel army, overlooked the necessities of her guests, and for three months the Mère Madeleine and her religious were often without bread to eat. Every day they went to St. Sulpice to hear Mass, and from five o'clock till noon they might be seen upon their knees at prayer. M. Olier, who had himself recommended them to Mme. de Bouteville's hospitality, concluded that, as a matter of course, they were suitably cared for, and it was not until one of his priests visited them and beheld with his own eyes their destitute condition that he became aware of their sufferings, when he caused them to be removed to the house of his brother, the Grand-Audiencier, who was absent with the Court, and made adequate provision for their support. In the midst of her greatest privations the Mère Madeleine gave testimony of a confidence in God which was truly heroic. At the very time that herself and her nuns were in want of the mere necessaries of life, she had the charity to go in quest of alms for the relief of another distressed community. An act so purely supernatural might well receive a supernatural reward; we may, therefore, give the readier credence to a circumstance which we find recorded in the annals of the house; viz., that a little sum of money which Mme. de Bouteville had given them, and which was placed under an image of the Blessed Virgin, continued to be miraculously multiplied, according to their needs. Peace being temporarily restored, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon came to their aid, and, after overcoming many obstacles apparently insurmountable, the nuns of Notre Dame de Miséricorde were established in community on the 3rd of November, 1649, M. Olier, at the desire of P. Yvan, undertaking the office of their director.

The Duke of Orleans, by the part he had taken against the King, and by his refusal to sue for pardon, had irreparably ruined his fortunes, and was banished for life to his castle of Blois. His reverses were productive of the happiest effects in disenchanting his mind of the world and its illusions, a result to which, under

God, the influence and counsels of M. Olier not a little contributed. To the Duchess, who, as we have seen, was a woman of great piety and virtue, the spiritual state of her husband had long been a matter of deep anxiety. To obtain his conversion, she had never ceased to offer her prayers, communions, and numerous good works; in all which she had a worthy coadjutor in the person of one of her maids of honour, Anne de Campet de Saujeon, a lady of high attainments, whose family had long been attached to that of Orleans, and from whose society the Duke derived much advantage. A malevolent world chose to throw discredit on the relations subsisting between them, and in 1649 a certain Abbé de la Croix-Christ, a declared favourer of the Jansenistic tenets, persuaded her suddenly to leave the ducal mansion and betake herself to the Carmelite convent, with a view of entering the Order. But, yielding to the advice of M. Olier and other ecclesiastics of St. Sulpice, who judged that she had no vocation for the religious life, and might do more good by remaining in the world, she was induced to reconsider her determination, and, in time, even the most censorious were obliged to confess that she used her influence with the Duke in a manner which did credit both to herself and to her advisers. The Duke (as before observed) had been addicted to profane swearing, but his manners in this, as in other matters, became entirely reformed, a change the merit of which his daughter, the "Great Mademoiselle," who had no liking for Mme. de Saujeon, ascribes mainly to that lady. "I must allow" (she says in her *Mémoires*) "that she contributed greatly to make Monsieur think of his salvation. He went regularly every day to Mass; he was never absent from the High Mass of his parish, or from Vespers, or from other public devotions. He would not tolerate swearing in his house; he corrected himself of this bad habit; and I have great hope that God will have mercy on him."* Mme. de Motteville bears similar testimony: "He submitted piously to the Divine Will; he became devout, his life was exemplary; he had his hours of seclusion and prayer; he left off gambling; and never did prince take more pleasure in retirement than he."

* This great lady was so devoid of piety that she could not endure to see it in others. The numerous services and devotions at St. Sulpice became at length so obnoxious to her that she resolved (as she says) to find a parish in which she would not be constantly meeting with people who troubled her conscience. She accordingly addressed herself to the Archbishop of Paris, who recommended that of St. Séverin.

Mme. de Saujeon accompanied the Duke and his family to Blois, where, aided by the powerful co-operation of M. Olier, who deputed one of his priests to act as chaplain to the household, she continued to carry on the good work she had begun at Paris. That zealous servant of God urged upon him the duty of repairing the evils of the civil war he had excited, by devoting a sum of money annually to restoring the churches of Languedoc which had been destroyed by the Calvinists, supplying vessels for the altar in the place of those which had been plundered, and relieving the multitudes whom he had been so instrumental in impoverishing. With these admonitions the Duke cordially complied, charging himself also with the establishment of a community of Sulpician priests at Blois; a design, however, which was eventually frustrated by the opposition of the Jansenistic party. The loss of his only son, which took place shortly after his banishment to Blois, gave the death-blow to all his worldly hopes and occasioned him the deepest grief, but he accepted the chastisement in a spirit of humble penitence; and in these truly Christian sentiments he persevered to the end of his life, as the *Mémoires* of the period testify. Nor were the good effects of M. Olier's counsels and Mme. de Saujeon's influence * confined to the Duke himself. His daughter Isabelle was brought up from her childhood in regular habits of devotion, and, on becoming Duchesse de Guise, she edified the Court—perhaps we might also say rebuked it—by her modesty and piety. On retiring to her duchy of Alençon she obtained from the then Superior, M. Tronson, the services of a Curé who had been trained at St. Sulpice, M. Pierre Chénart. He had the happiness of bringing many Protestants to the true faith and

* Mme. de Saujeon subsequently took part in the establishment of a house near St. Sulpice, for the reception of ladies who wished to go through the exercises of a retreat. This institution had been projected by M. Olier, but it was not founded until after his death. With that spiritual discernment which was so remarkable in him, he perceived that Mme. de Saujeon, with all her excellences, was not the person to be the superior of a house, and had expressly forbidden her appointment to the office, which was accordingly conferred on Mme. Tronson, mother of the celebrated Sulpician, a lady of consummate virtue and prudence, who had been for years under his direction. At her death, however, Mme. de Saujeon was chosen as her successor, and exhibited so imperious a spirit as to lead to the greatest disunion. In contravention of the rule, she retained her office for nine years, at the end of which time another was elected superior, a proceeding which she took as a personal affront; and so great was her influence at Court that she succeeded in procuring the suppression of the Community.

founded a community of priests who laboured zealously in evangelizing the population. So prolific of good is the love of God in one elect and holy soul.

Another of M. Olier's parishioners whom the calamities of the times had the effect of bringing to repentance was the Prince de Conti, who had been among the most ardent partisans of the Fronde. Finding himself disgraced and discredited at Court, he so far humbled himself as to ask the hand of Mazarin's niece in marriage, a measure which proved greatly to his spiritual advantage; for, conceiving a hearty detestation for the sins of his past life, he gave himself generously to the service of God. He was thus brought into close connection with M. Olier, under whose direction he engaged in many charitable works, and would sometimes dine at the Seminary for the sake of the edification which he derived from conversation with the inmates. Although he had shown no vocation to the ecclesiastical state, and was both irregular in his manners and unsteady in his religious belief, he had received the tonsure and had been put in possession of several benefices. These, when his conscience became enlightened, he resigned and, to compensate in some sort for the devastations of which his soldiery had been guilty during the civil war, especially in Bordeaux, he distributed near upon two millions of livres in alms, and readily acceded to his wife's proposal of selling her jewels for the same object, including a necklace and earrings of great value. "M. le Prince de Conti," wrote St. Vincent de Paul to M. Pesnelle, Superior at Genoa, "will one day be our judge, at least he will be mine. In his fidelity to prayer he is admirable; he makes it for two hours daily, once in the morning and again in the evening; and, however numerous his occupations and with whatever company he may be engaged, he never fails."* The Prince continued in intimate relations with M. Olier until the latter's death, and was one of twelve or thirteen gentlemen of rank who for several years afterwards assembled in what had been that great man's room to confer together on subjects connected with religion and charity. True, in the excess of a mistaken zeal, he allowed himself for some time to be seduced into favouring the new opinions through the influence of M. Pavillon, Bishop of Aleth, but ere he died he made a most complete abjuration of his errors and refused to admit that prelate into his chamber, as being a rebel against the Holy See and a teacher of falsehood, to whom he had no desire to listen.

* *Lettres de S. Vincent de Paul*, No. 578, T. ii. p. 469.

The Prince de Condé, unhappily, long remained faithless both to his king and to his God, and belied his title of Great, not only by maintaining his attitude of revolt, but by offering his sword to Spain and making parricidal war on his own country; nor was it till the marriage of Louis XIV., in 1660, that he returned to his allegiance and was allowed to re-enter France. Even then he persevered in his irreligious courses, and it was only in the last days of his turbulent life that he consoled his friends and all good men by a sincere but long-delayed repentance.

CHAPTER XIII.

PILGRIMAGES AND JOURNEYS. M. OLIER RESIGNS HIS CURE.

IN the course of his pastoral ministrations M. Olier was obliged on several occasions, from motives of health, to make excursions into the provinces. Of these no mention has hitherto been made, in order not to break the thread of the narrative. Nearly five years had elapsed since he commenced the reform of his vast parish before he allowed himself any relaxation from his labours, and then only because it became necessary as a relief to exhausted nature. To the expostulations of friends who warned him of the injury he was inflicting on himself, he would reply, "Jesus Christ is our strength; His charity ought to banish all our fears, and the pure love of Him make us embrace all such toils with joy;" and on M. de Bretonvilliers urging him to give himself the rest he so much needed he said, "My child, this is neither the time nor the place for taking one's ease; our Lord would not have us find our consolation on earth. Let us wait for a blessed eternity, and then we shall enjoy God alone." Even when he yielded to their entreaties, and went for a few days into the country, he allowed himself no recreation. Prayer, Mass, writing letters, and sometimes reading would occupy the whole morning; and, if in the afternoon he submitted so far as to take a short walk, he was back again at his prayers and occupations till supper time. If he were reminded that he had come into the country for repose, he would answer, "Our Lord gives me grace to find my repose in these things more than in aught else." The autumn of 1647, however, found him in such a state of debility that, on the physicians assuring him that unless he had complete rest and change of air he would be compelled to resign his parish, he deemed it his duty to obey their injunctions.

It had long been his desire to visit Annecy, there to venerate the

tomb of the holy Bishop of Geneva, and return him thanks for the recovery of his health some years before, which he attributed to the intercession of the Saint. He was accompanied by M. de Bretonvilliers and other priests of the Seminary; and, before setting out, he went, as was his custom, to ask the blessing of his heavenly Patroness in the church of Notre Dame. Neither did he neglect to make his will, as usual in those times, when travelling was attended with perils unknown or disregarded at the present day. France at this period was full of holy places and holy relics, and, it may be added, of holy living persons, and M. Olier so ordered his route as to enable him to see a great number of all three. His journey was thus one continued pilgrimage. His first destination was the Abbey of Clairvaux, and he stopped on his way at Châtillon-sur-Seine, celebrated for its shrine of Our Lady, at which the great St. Bernard had received extraordinary graces. It was evening when he reached the place, but he went at once to the church, and remained some time before the miraculous image of Mary. The next morning he said Mass at her altar, where it seemed to the ecclesiastics who accompanied him that he was favoured with some signal consolation, for his countenance was radiant with joy and his conversation more than usually inflamed with the ardour of divine love. On arriving within two miles of Clairvaux he dismounted from his horse, and, with his companions, walked the rest of the way in silence and prayer. The scene was one that invited to contemplation, being a thick, embowering wood, such as usually shut in the ancient monasteries. It was the eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and he remained two days at the abbey, during which he was so absorbed in devotion that it was difficult to draw his attention to external things. He said Mass in the old conventual chapel, visited every spot in and around the monastery which recalled any circumstance in the life of the holy founder, and knelt for a long time in the narrow cell of the Saint, to the great edification of the religious who accompanied him.

From Clairvaux he repaired to Dijon, where he spent ten days with the Carthusian monks of that city, who welcomed him with lively demonstrations of joy. Thence he moved on to Citeaux. Here his first act, as everywhere, was to adore Jesus in His Sacramental Presence, and to pray that he might have some part in those heavenly benedictions which of old He had been pleased to pour down upon the great Order which had its birth in this spot, and which had been the source of untold graces to France. As though

to assure him that his prayer had been heard, the Abbot of the monastery, who was also Superior-General of the Order, granted him and the whole Seminary of St. Sulpice the privilege of a share in all the prayers and good works of the religious.

His next place of sojourn was Beaune, where, in the Carmelite convent of that town, dwelt one of the most favoured souls of that age, the Sœur Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, who had received a special call from God to promote an increase of devotion to the Sacred Infancy of His Son.* M. de Renty was also very zealous in propagating this devotion, and, though the Sœur Marguerite lived in the closest seclusion and for thirteen years had never spoken to any secular person, he succeeded in obtaining access to her, and had ever since kept up a correspondence with the inmates of the convent. It was his particular desire, and that of other devout servants of God at Paris, that M. Olier should see this holy nun, as they relied on his spiritual discernment to test the reality of her gifts, and believed that both she and the community in general would derive much benefit from his counsels. M. de Renty had accordingly written to apprize them of the proposed visit. The Sœur Marguerite had no knowledge, personal or otherwise, of M. Olier, but she had received a divine intimation that God was about to unite her, through the devotion to the Infant Jesus, in the closest spiritual relations with one who should act as her guide in the way of perfection. After visiting the church and the hospital—for his invariable practice, on entering a town, was first to adore Jesus on the throne of His love and then to go and venerate Him in the persons of the poor—M. Olier repaired to the convent, and Marguerite no sooner beheld the holy man than, moved by a feeling of profound veneration, she threw herself at his feet, adoring (as she said) the Divine Infant in the person of His servant. Of the conversation that followed no record has been preserved; but when they parted, the holy nun put into his hands a little picture on which she had written these words: "My Reverend Father, the Infant Jesus, who is our bond, our life, our all, will consummate and make perfect the grace He has wrought in us this day." M. Olier, on his part, gave her the crucifix of the Mère Agnès,—which, however, was returned to him on the death of

* The Association of the Sacred Infancy, instituted by Marguerite, was approved by Innocent X. and Alexander VII. in 1653 and 1661, and in 1855 was erected into an Archconfraternity by Pius IX., who also declared her Venerable.

the nun,—and he continued to direct her by letter as long as she lived. All the inmates of the house consulted him, and it was observed by the Mother Prioress that, exemplary as was the fervour and devotion which before prevailed among them, it became sensibly deepened from the date of this memorable visit. It would seem as though, by the knowledge M. Olier thus obtained of the secret virtues and extraordinary devotions of this chosen soul, God intended to make known to the world the perfections of her sanctity. It was through his report of her supernatural gifts that P. Amelote was led to write her Life, and nowhere were the merits of this saintly woman held in higher consideration than in the Seminary of St. Sulpice. It was in consequence also of this visit, and of the relations which followed from it, that the Community has ever had a peculiar devotion to the Sacred Infancy. M. Olier engaged twelve of his most zealous ecclesiastics to recite the office, which he ordered also to be chanted in the parish church on the 25th of every month; and the illustrious Fénelon, then a priest of the Community, composed the well-known Litany of the Infant Jesus, which used to be sung at St. Sulpice after Vespers.

Quitting Beaune, M. Olier went to venerate the body of St. Claude, which had been preserved incorrupt from the end of the seventh century in the town which had grown up around his monastery and had taken the name of the Saint. After journeying for some days, the party found themselves on a dangerous mountain path, which ran along the edge of a precipitous ravine, over which the torrents went dashing and roaring into the depths below. Night came on, and they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses, treading warily every step they took; a heavy rain also began to descend, which rendered the pathway slippery and drenched them to the skin. To their dismay, the guide now confessed that he had lost the road, and did not know how to regain it. In this extremity, M. Olier, who alone preserved his usual calmness, said, "My children, let us set ourselves to pray, and beg our Lord to vouchsafe Himself to be our guide. He has told us that He is 'the way;' let us follow Him, then, and we shall regain our road. Let us commend ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, and to the great St. Claude whom we are visiting." They remained thus for a quarter of an hour, when the guide, as though he had suddenly recovered his recollection, exclaimed, "Now I know the way to go;" and so, following him through the darkness, they at length reached the confines of a

village called Condé. The inhabitants, seeing five horsemen arriving thus at night, were distrustful of their intentions, and at first refused to let them enter. M. Olier, however, speedily induced them to relent; but, whether their suspicions were not entirely dispelled or that they had no better accommodation to offer, the only lodging they provided for the travellers was a hovel in which they kept their cattle, and all the food they gave them was some coarse bread and water. To M. Olier this hard fare seemed to be a source of real enjoyment; he conversed with the peasants with so much cheerfulness and affectionateness, and his manner, as he spoke to them of the things of God, was at once so familiar and so touching that their hearts were completely won. When he took his departure the next morning many of them burst into tears, and so unwilling were they to part with him that they accompanied him on his way, and by the good Providence of God were the means of preventing one of the party losing his life in attempting to cross the river near a dangerous fall. On reaching St. Claude, the pilgrims venerated the holy body so wonderfully preserved;* and so great were the interior consolations which M. Olier experienced that he says they surpassed in sweetness all the heavenly favours he had ever before received. It was painful to him to be disturbed when one of the priests of the place came to show him the other treasures of the church; but, on being conducted to the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament and finding himself alone with Him whom his soul loved, he felt himself deeply impressed with the conviction that, while venerating the relics of the saints, he and his community must look for

* The fact of this preservation is incontestable. The body of the Saint lay in a silver shrine, adorned with precious stones. Three times a day the feet were exposed to the veneration of the faithful, who were permitted to approach and kiss them.—(Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, June 6th.) In the year 1785 it was transferred to another shrine, in which it could be seen entire; but on the 19th of June, 1794, during the frenzy of the Revolution, these precious remains, which for eleven centuries had been the object of so much religious veneration in France, were torn from their resting-place, and, after being dragged through the streets, were burned, in the very town which bore the Saint's name. Heaven, however, avenged the horrible sacrilege; for, on the very same day five years afterwards, the whole town was reduced to ashes by a conflagration which broke out at mid-day, and which, to all human seeming, might have been extinguished by the use of such ordinary means as were at hand. The only house spared by the flames was that of a devout Christian named Calais, whose wife had carefully preserved a rosary which had been taken from the body. An arm of the Saint which had been previously separated from the relics is still to be seen in a silver reliquary.

everything from the Spirit of Jesus and from the Adorable Mystery of the Altar, whence the saints themselves derived all their sanctity.

He at length reached the term of his pilgrimage, and on arriving at Annecy went immediately to the tomb of St. Francis de Sales. Many years had elapsed since he beheld the holy prelate, and then he had seen him only with the eyes of a child; but his whole aspect and appearance were as present to him as though it had been but yesterday, and he had drunk so deeply of his spirit and the contemplation of his character and virtues had engraven his lineaments so ineffaceably on his heart, that he approached him with all the confidence of one who was going to seek counsel and instruction from a spiritual father. The three days he remained at Annecy were spent almost entirely in prayer; not, however, at the tomb of St. Francis, but before the Blessed Sacrament; for, as before at St. Claude, he was conscious of a secret communication which told him that it was in the Sacramental Presence of his Lord he would experience the most powerful effects of the intercession of the Saint. Indeed, when he would address himself to the holy Bishop and beg him to give him a portion of that love for Jesus with which his blessed soul was burning, he found him, as it seemed, deaf to his prayers. This apparent indifference on the part of one who while on earth (as he says) was kindness and sweetness itself, a living expression, as it were, of the Divine goodness, and who, now that he was perfected and confirmed in grace and enjoyed the beatific vision of God, must love him with a more intense charity, could proceed, he knew, from no other motive but that of his spiritual advantage; and then the penetrating conviction entered his soul that the lesson which the Saint intended to teach him was this: that he did not love God purely for His own sake, but was too much attached to His gifts of grace; hence a want of repose, simplicity, and enlargement of heart; that henceforward God would have him love Him purely for Himself and in Himself; love Him in His Spirit, which is charity, pure charity; and embrace all his brethren in Jesus Christ, desiring for all the plenitude of His gifts. And this perfection God had decreed to give him only through the Sacred Mystery of the Altar. The last degree of self-renunciation at which a soul arrives is when it gives up its attachment to those interior gifts and communications of God which are its joy and delight,—but into which a kind of spiritual sensuality is apt to creep,—and consents to serve Him for the pure love of Him alone, and, so to say,

at its own expense. Of this self-spoliation M. Olier was to be a shining example. The great Pattern and Model of this high perfection is Jesus self-annihilated in the Blessed Sacrament, where He lies in a kind of mystical death. The Holy Spirit, who was leading His servant to this point of sublime perfection, directed him, therefore, to the school in which he was to acquire it.

In the Visitation Convent of this town there was an aged nun, Anne-Marie Rosset, who had been under the direction of St. Francis de Sales, had formed one of St. Jane-Frances de Chantal's community, and been head of a house at Bourges. She was remarkable for her humility and simplicity of spirit; and, as a test of the perfection with which she had mortified all feeling of human respect, the Mother-Superior called her into the parlour and bade her sing before the stranger priest. She immediately complied, with no musical voice, as may be imagined, and continued singing till a sign was made to her to cease. On her withdrawing, M. Olier, struck with admiration, exclaimed that an act of submission so heroic was a more convincing evidence of sanctity than fifty miracles.

The object of his journey was now accomplished, but, instead of returning by the way he came, he resolved on visiting the holy places of Provence. The road from Annecy to Grenoble brought him within sight of Geneva, and he could not behold the unhappy city without an expression of grief. "Let us pass on, my children," he said, "and not tarry in a place where men will not have Jesus, our Divine Master and Teacher, to reign over them." He spent five days at Grenoble, where he again saw the Mère de Bressand, who had left Nantes to become superior of the convent in that town. It was now also, in all probability, that he made the personal acquaintance of Marie de Valernot, Dame d'Herculais, whose life was a miracle of prayer. She rose usually at three, and gave four or five hours to prayer; she then heard Mass, made her spiritual reading, and continued her devotions till dinner-time. A quarter of an hour after this repast she retired again to her oratory, where she remained till supper, after which she again betook herself to prayer, occupying thus several hours; sometimes, indeed, she spent the whole night communing with God. The little nourishment she took, and the little sleep she allowed herself, made it difficult to understand how she could support life; but that which was still more marvellous was her perfect self-abnegation. One day, her husband, wishing to give his friends an example of her obedience and equa-

nimity of spirit, called her, at a time when he knew she was engaged at her devotions, to take part in some game they were playing. She complied on the instant, and exhibited so much cheerfulness and liveliness in her manner that a stranger might have imagined that none of the party took a warmer interest in the diversion; for, with all her dislike of the world, she had a great dread of making piety contemptible by any too apparent singularity.*

Finding himself in the neighbourhood of the Grande Chartreuse, he passed two days in a spot rendered holy by the presence of St. Bruno, and thence repaired to the abbey of St. Antoine de Vienne, where he venerated the relics of the great Solitary of the East.† At Valence he once more conferred with Marie Tessonnière, who had never ceased to regard him with the deepest reverence, which she now again evinced by committing to his keeping all that she had written in obedience to her director, the Père Coton. They parted, never to meet again in this world, as Marie well knew, for she told M. Olier that her death was near; and, in fact, it occurred six months afterwards. M. de Bretonvilliers, who was present at their interviews, says that the sight of this holy woman filled his soul with sweeter consolations than he had ever before experienced. "She looked to me," he writes, "more like an angel of heaven than a creature still living on earth. She seemed so filled with the Spirit of God, and the ravishing modesty of her countenance, which had something supernatural in it, made such an impression upon me, that even now, although many years have passed away since I saw her, I am as much moved, when I think of her, as if I had her still before my eyes."

On quitting Valence M. Olier passed on to Avignon, visiting on his way, at Pont Saint-Esprit, the Mère Françoise de Mazelli, founder and first superior of the Convent of the Visitation in that town, a woman of extraordinary sanctity and virtue, who (as it is said in her Life) "received him as an angel sent by God, and made known to him with all sincerity the secrets of her soul." M. Olier next paid his devotions (for the second time) at what were called, pre-emi-

* Mme. d'Herculais died in 1654, aged 35.

† The body of St. Anthony, which, when the Saracens took possession of Egypt, had been conveyed to Constantinople, was transferred, about the year 980, to the church of the Priory of La Motte St. Didier, near Vienne in Dauphiné, which subsequently became an abbey and the head house of the Order of the Antonines.

nently, "the holy places of Provence," La Sainte Baume, Marseilles, and Tarascon, where, according to immemorial tradition,* St. Mary Magdalen, St. Lazarus, and St. Martha had lived and died. At Aix he visited the convent of Notre Dame de Miséricorde, founded by P. Yvan with the aid of the Mère Madeleine de la Trinité, mentioned in a previous chapter, who, although only the daughter of a common soldier, had gained such a reputation for sanctity and prudence that the governor of the province and others in high station were accustomed to avail themselves of her advice. In obedience to her director, she detailed to M. Olier, with the utmost simplicity, the singular graces with which God had favoured her; when, strongly impressed with the conviction that such extraordinary graces could be safe only under the guardianship of the deepest humility, he was moved to desire that this virtue should be rendered more perfect in her by a voluntary resignation of her office. His sole reply, therefore, to her recital, which he allowed her to continue for nearly four hours, was an earnest word of counsel: that, instead of ruling the house which she had helped to found, she should descend to the level of the lowest of her subjects; adding that it was far better for her to obey than to command; that he had learned enough about her to be able to speak with decision; that she must believe him, and do blindly what he advised. The Mère Madeleine at once complied, only bewailing her imperfections and declaring that she had not yet even begun to serve God in fear and self-abasement. On the morning after her conference with M. Olier, she said to him, "Monsieur, we ought to speak little, love well, and do much." To which he replied, "Mère Madeleine, we ought to speak little, love well, and do *nothing;*" meaning that she must be content henceforth to obey. To the great grief of her religious she accordingly resigned her charge, as, indeed, she had long desired to do, but had been prevented by P. Yvan, who felt the need of her sound judgment and administrative talents. It soon became apparent that her resignation was a part of God's designs for the benefit of the institute, for, had she remained superioress at Aix, and thus, by virtue of her office, continued to be charged with the government of the whole Order, she would not have been at liberty to found a house at Paris, as we have seen her doing. Writing to M. Olier

* This ancient tradition has been recently investigated, and its authenticity established, by M. Olier's biographer, the Abbé Faillon, in his work entitled *L'Apostolat de St. Lazare, &c., d'après des Monuments Inédits.*

shortly after, P. Yvan said, "Truly it was God's will that the nuns of Notre Dame de Miséricorde should place their whole confidence in you, and that their holy institute should be completely in your hands: of this there can be no doubt. God prepared you for this long since, and so ordered it that I should go to Paris to make your acquaintance, and trust you so perfectly as to beg you to undertake the direction of this Order. He moved me to ask for a man after His own heart, and He has given him to me."

Returning to Avignon, M. Olier took occasion to deliver some letters with which he had been entrusted for the Mère de St. Michel, Superioress of the Convent of the Visitation in that city, of whose sanctity and, indeed, of whose very name he was ignorant. On first beholding each other, they felt themselves (as we read in the Life of the holy mother) elevated to God in so extraordinary a manner that neither was able to utter a word. Their only converse was silence, and their union was in spirit, not in speech. "Truly," as M. Olier himself writes on another occasion, "it is a thing altogether incomprehensible to the human mind, this divine operation of the Holy Ghost in souls." The next morning he said Mass at the convent, at which the Mère de St. Michel communicated; and then (as her biographer quaintly expresses it), "after having discoursed together after the manner of angels, they were able to speak in the language of men." Each conceived for the other a deep veneration; and, seeing the confidence which their superioress reposed in the holy man, the nuns begged him to induce her to moderate her extraordinary austerities. But he bade them not disquiet themselves, for that He who had hitherto enabled her to maintain so mortified a life was pleased that she should continue it, and would direct and support her as He had hitherto done. From this time forth M. Olier kept up a spiritual correspondence by letter with this great servant of God.

Our limits will not permit more than a passing allusion to the most remarkable of those holy persons with whom M. Olier conferred during this journey. They may be taken as representatives of that very high order of sanctity which was to be found in many a nook and corner throughout the land, as well as in the great city of Paris, and between which and the ordinary standard of Christian goodness many gradations existed, of which little has been recorded in the annals of the Church and the world knows nothing.

From Avignon, where he spent four or five days, he moved on

to Montpellier, taking Nîmes on his way; and there, as in several other places, he was bountiful of those graces which God had bestowed upon him for the conversion and sanctification of souls, especially of some who had been seminarists of St. Sulpice and whose fervour he was aware had grown cool. At Montpeiroux, a little town of Languedoc, he paid a visit to M. de Parlages, father of a priest who was a member of his community. His account of his reception is given with a tenderness and warmth of feeling which mark the affectionate nature of the man. "I cannot tell you," he wrote to the young Abbé, "the joy I experienced on seeing your father and dear brother. I could not restrain my tears when I spoke of you to this good parent of yours, whose uprightness and piety are equal to his admirable social qualities and are an edification and a savour of holiness to all the province. I was quite confused by the courteous and respectful reception which I met with both from them and from your good mother; among other kindly offices, they obliged me with a litter, and seemed as if they could not lavish sufficient attention and affection upon me." Thence he passed on to Clermont-Lodève and Rodez, where several of his ecclesiastics were labouring for the reformation of the clergy of those dioceses, and so returned to Paris, after visiting the tomb of St. Martial at Limoges.

This journey, which lasted three months, so far from interrupting his union with God, seemed even to increase his recollection and fervour. M. de Bretonvilliers, who accompanied him on various occasions and travelled with him as many as 3,600 miles, affirms that he never saw him look at any object from a mere motive of curiosity, although it were such as might well have engaged the attention of the passing stranger; and this, not as if he were putting a forced constraint upon himself, but in all freedom and simplicity, as one to whom habitual self-control had become a sort of second nature, and who lived ever in the presence of God, to whom all his senses had been consecrated in the laver of holy baptism. One of the party seeing a noble castle in the distance and remarking on its beauty, "Ah, well," said he, "and what is this beauty? a great pile of stones one upon another: what a crash there will be at the end of the world, when it will be all destroyed!" On another occasion, being urged to look at some grand building by the way, he did so for a moment, and then said, "One day all this grandeur will be consumed by fire, and all this beauty will pass

away in smoke. Such is the value which Jesus Christ sets upon it all: He will doom it to the flames at the end of the world. Why do we not share His sentiments?" So strenuously did this holy man endeavour to detach his heart from the perishable things of this world and to have ever in him the mind which was also in Christ Jesus.

As the most consoling, the most sanctifying, action in the daily life of a priest is the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, however wearied he might be, he never dispensed himself from saying Mass, and would often rise at an early hour, and incur considerable fatigue, in order to reach some church at which he could satisfy his devotion. If he saw a spire in the distance he would beg the company to recite with him the *Tantum Ergo*, in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. "When I see a place where my Master reposes," he writes, "I experience a feeling of unutterable joy. I say to myself, 'Thou art there, my All; mayest Thou be adored by the angels for ever!'" On entering a town or village, after making an act of homage to our Lord, he would salute its angel-guardians, and commend himself to their prayers; and, if he were going to minister in the place, he would put himself entirely at their disposal and beg them to obtain for him the gift of touching the people's hearts. He prayed almost literally "without ceasing." In order not to cause delay he would make his hour's meditation on horseback; then he would say Office, and perform all his usual exercises of devotion. His recreation was to speak of holy things and such as tended to edification. While at Mâcon, miscounting the strokes of the clock, he rose half an hour after he had lain down, and on discovering his error, instead of returning to rest, he spent the remainder of the night in prayer; and this he did on several other occasions. So constant, indeed, was his application to God that at one of the inns on the way the servants, finding him always on his knees when they went into his room, said that there was one of the party who did nothing but pray.

His liberality was unfailing. In several convents where the religious were very poor he gave abundant alms. At Mont Ferrand in Auvergne, seeing a debtor being led to prison, he was moved with compassion, and, finding that his only crime was his poverty, he paid his debt and set him free. If he met with a beggar on the way, after giving him an alms, he would speak to him of God and of his salvation with all the affection of a father. Going once by

water he took two poor people into his company, and during the passage both fed and catechised them with the tenderest charity. On another occasion he made a poor peasant woman get into the carriage with all her bundles, and as her only anxiety was to overtake her husband who was on before, he took occasion from the circumstance to make a most sweet discourse to his companions on the love of the Church for her Divine Spouse, and that which souls whom Jesus loved even to dying for them should testify to Him by following Him wherever He goes and bearing His yoke after Him. Once, indeed, his charity was abused by a beggar-man, who lay half-naked on a dung-heap by the roadside, affecting to be ill and unable to rise. Alighting from his horse, he called to his companion, and the two together, taking the wretched object in their arms, regardless of his filthy state, carried him towards the neighbouring town; and there, exhausted with fatigue, they left him for a few minutes while they went to seek assistance at the house of the Frères de la Charité. On returning, the man had disappeared, and then they knew that they had been tricked by a cunning impostor; but, as M. Faillon remarks, this good Samaritan lost none of his reward, for the merit of almsgiving lies wholly in the disposition of the giver, and not in the worthiness of the receiver.

His humility was as admirable as his charity. He would make himself the servant of all, and it was impossible to prevent him; awaking his companions in a morning, carrying behind him on his horse such things as they wanted, anticipating all their wishes, and rendering them every service in his power. On the way to Saint-Claude, the horse of one of the party casting a shoe, he made the rider take his own in its place, and, having covered the animal's hoof with a thick glove, he walked by its side for more than three miles, and arrived at the next village bathed in perspiration. This spirit of condescension made him consult M. de Bretonvilliers on all occasions, little as well as great; and, when that ecclesiastic complained of the deference he paid him, and asked him why he sought the advice of a man who had much greater need of his guidance, he replied, "My dear child, act with simplicity, and tell me frankly what you think; for, if I were alone with John (one of the servants), I should ask his advice and should do simply what he told me. If possible, let us never do our own will, even in little things." For this reason he recommended that on a journey one of the com-

pany should be chosen as leader, who should be to the rest in the place of God, and be obeyed in everything with an entire submission. On arriving at an inn he would choose the worst chamber, and, if there were two beds and one seemed to be intended for a servant, he would take it for himself and leave the other for his companion. Going one day to Laon, being desirous of venerating a relic of St. Lawrence which was preserved in the Premonstratensian Abbey of St. Martin, he rang several times at the bell and, when no porter made his appearance, he regarded it as a sign that he was unworthy to enter, and knelt down before the door, begging pardon of God and honouring at a distance what for his sins he was forbidden, as he deemed, to approach more nearly.

Wherever he went his charity and zeal found objects on which to expend themselves; the masters and mistresses of the inns at which he lodged, servants and children, and the country-people generally, all, in turn, experienced his tender and pastoral care, while against evil in every shape he never failed to protest with a holy severity which was seldom without avail. After the death of Marie Tessonnière, he paid a visit to Valence, where she was held in great veneration, and, after spending a considerable time in prayer before her tomb, proceeded to the house of a painter for the purpose of procuring a likeness of her; which, however, on inspection, he found to be quite unworthy of its subject. At the same time his eyes lighted on a picture of an immodest character, and, breaking out in terms of most earnest reprobation, he so wrought upon the artist's better feelings that he consented to sell it to him, although he had already received part payment for it from another person, and promised never to be guilty of the like again. Whereupon the servant of God then and there ripped the picture to pieces and threw them into the fire.

We may include in this chapter the particulars of another journey which he made in the following year, when his zeal impelled him to visit his priory of Clisson, in order to correct some abuses which had arisen there. It had been his habit to dedicate ten days every year to a spiritual retreat, and once, when he was prevented by stress of occupation from satisfying his devotion for two successive years, he repaired the omission by making three retreats of a like duration within a period of six weeks. Sometimes he made his retreat at the noviciate house of the Jesuit Fathers, which adjoined St. Sulpice, but this year he repaired to the Franciscan monastery at Meulan,

where, on the 4th of October, 1648, the feast of the holy Patriarch, he commenced a retreat of ten days by making a general confession of his whole life, both as a satisfaction for his sins and to renew the confusion which (as he said) a sinner ought to feel for his sins, even when they have been remitted. From Meulan he passed on to Chartres, the scene to him of so many spiritual favours, and there, for several days, he might be seen kneeling, immoveable, in prayer, from six o'clock in the morning till midday, and again from two o'clock in the afternoon till six in the evening, to the edification of all who were witnesses of his recollection and devotion. He also visited, for the second time, the church of Notre Dame des Ardilliers, near Saumur. It was on his way from this place that he gave an instance of his humility and sweet condescension which reminds us of a similar occurrence in the life of St. Francis Xavier. Mindful of his vow of making himself the servant of all, he was in the habit, when on travel, of acting as his own groom. While thus engaged, a gentleman entered the stable and mistaking him in the darkness for one of the men about the place, bade him rub down his horse. M. Olier at once complied, only too well pleased to have an opportunity of doing a kindness. The gentleman's surprise may be imagined when, returning shortly after, he found that the person he had taken for the ostler was a priest; and his confusion was the more increased when he learned who it was that had performed such an office for him. But M. Olier took the whole matter so naturally, and showed such unaffected pleasure at having rendered him a service, that the other knew not which most to admire,—the humility with which the man of God had obeyed his orders, or the simplicity with which he received his apologies and his thanks.

He profited by his stay at Clisson to make a second pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Toute Joie, and, after successfully accomplishing the reform of his priory, took his way to Vannes, for the purpose of praying at the tomb of St. Vincent Ferrer, the Apostle of Brittany in the 15th century, whose body was exposed for the veneration of the faithful. Nor did he fail to satisfy his devotion to St. Anne by visiting her image at Auray,* which had lately become renowned

* On the 7th of March, 1625, a peasant named Yves Nicolazic found in the earth an antique figure, which was supposed to be that of St. Anne. The report brought great crowds to the spot, and the consequence was an extraordinary devotion to the Mother of our Blessed Lady throughout the whole province.

for the number of miracles wrought before it, and had attracted in consequence a vast concourse of pilgrims. Through the intercession of this most powerful saint he besought of God the gift of silence, as well amid the contradictions he suffered from the world as amid the favours he received from Heaven, and also grace to act always in accordance with our Lord's intentions and by the movement of His Divine Spirit. Returning to Nantes, he visited, for the last time, the convent of La Régrippière,* and had the happiness of finding it a model of regularity and fervour. Great was the joy of the nuns at beholding once more the holy priest to whom, under God, they owed the recovery of their vocation, and all hastened to profit by his instructions for their greater perfection in the religious life.

During this journey he visited all the places sacred to the great St. Martin, to whom (as before related) he had a particular devotion. At Marmoutier he beheld the grotto, hewn out of the rock, which the Saint had converted into an oratory,† and also made the pilgrimage of Candes, a little town of Touraine on the borders of Anjou, where he died. But it was at Tours, and in the great church of that town dedicated to the holy prelate,‡ that he experienced the

A new image was wrought out of the old one, and became the object of veneration to thousands of pilgrims. This image was burnt at the Revolution, but a fragment was preserved, and inserted in the foot of that which is still venerated under the name of St. Anne d'Auray.

* The convent shared the fate of so many other religious houses at the Revolution; but the memory of M. Olier, and of the reforms he accomplished, long lingered in the neighbourhood.

† "Marmoutier stands on the bank of the Loire about two miles from Tours, and is now in the possession of the 'Religious of the Sacred Heart.' It was the cradle of Western monasticism centuries before Iona and Lindisfarne and Luxeuil were peopled by the disciples of SS. Columba and Columbanus; and, like the Irish monasteries, it eventually accepted the gentler rule of St. Benedict. The Abbey was destroyed in the Great Revolution, but in 1847 the site was purchased and saved from profanation by the Venerable Mère Barat. Nothing remains of the more modern Abbey save the wall, and the great gateway before which B. Urban II. preached the Crusade; but it may be said that the ruin of the Abbey has restored the Marmoutier of the fourth century, for the caves and catacombs where St. Martin and his disciples dwelt are now seen very much as they were in the Saint's time." F. Morris, *St. Martin and St. Patrick*, "Dublin Review," January, 1883, pp. 5, 6. See also a pleasant paper by Mrs. Mulhall, in the "Lamp" of August, 1884; where, however, by an unhappy printer's blunder Marmontier is substituted for Marmoutier.

‡ This church has long been a ruin, having been partially demolished at the Revolution and a street driven through its entire centre. But the devotion of

most powerful emotions; for there were preserved such of his precious relics as had escaped the sacrilegious fury of the Calvinists, when, in 1562, carrying fire and sword through the province, they did not spare the tomb of one whose resplendent virtues the whole Christian world had for so many centuries held in veneration. His soul thrilled with a secret awe, blended with a most consoling sweetness, a complex feeling, such as is said to have taken possession of the Saint himself when he set foot in a basilica where reposed the bones of martyrs, and which became still more intense when he was shown the spot where the heretics had burned the holy body. For hours he knelt before the tomb, so absorbed in his devotions that he never seemed to know how time was passing. One evening, supper being ready, the man of God was nowhere to be found. On inquiry, however, it was ascertained by his friends that in the afternoon he had been seen entering the church of St. Martin. The doors, which had been closed, were opened, and before the tomb of the saint knelt the object of their search, in the attitude of one who had lost all outward consciousness. He had knelt thus for seven hours unmoved; and even then, as though, like his Heavenly Master, he had meat to eat of which his friends knew nothing, he could not be induced to take his ordinary repast that night.

There was a reason why at this particular time M. Olier sought the special assistance of St. Martin. The patience and meekness of that prelate had been sorely tried by the insubordinate conduct of his deacon, whose sanctification, however, was at length effected through the admirable example of the Saint. A like affliction M. Olier was now suffering from the irregular conduct of his parochial clergy. For several months, under the pretext of their other numerous occupations, almost all had dispensed themselves from the observance of the usual morning prayers, as well as from

which it was formerly the scene has been transferred to the cathedral, where some relics of the Saint are still preserved.

In November, 1859, through the prayers and labours of M. Dupont, the "Holy Man of Tours," the tomb of the Saint, so long concealed, was discovered, and a provisional chapel erected over it. A considerable portion of the original site of the basilica was subsequently secured for the construction of an imposing church —"recalling in its architecture and proportions the age of the holy Thaumaturgus"—the commencement of which, it is hoped—notwithstanding the opposition which the undertaking has encountered on the part of the Government and the municipal authorities—will not be long delayed.

other exercises of the Community. The absence of M. du Ferrier at Rodez had given occasion to these disorders, and even when that ecclesiastic returned, as ill-health prevented him from being present at all the devotions of the house, their irregularity still continued. Convinced that nothing but his own personal example would correct the evil, M. du Ferrier began to rise at half-past four, and, ill as he was, repaired to the chapel, where he found some five or six persons assembled. After dinner, the others would have fain persuaded him that this strict observance would shorten his days, but the next morning he made his appearance as before. The third morning found not a single ecclesiastic missing, and, what was most remarkable, from that day M. du Ferrier's health, which had been ailing for three years, was perfectly restored, to the amazement of the whole Community. Hitherto M. Olier had lodged at the Seminary, but, on returning from this pilgrimage, he resolved, in order to encourage and confirm the inmates by his presence and example, to take up his abode in the house of the Community, which accordingly he did; and there he remained until he resigned the charge of the parish, as we are about to narrate.

This journey, like the former, may be said to have been one uninterrupted prayer; for neither on horseback nor in the midst of company was his attention distracted from God. One day, while the party were at dinner, it was notified to him that, the next stage being a long one, it would be necessary to start sooner than usual. Shortly after, he rose from table, and, going to the stable, saddled his horse, and rode away unperceived by the rest. His attendant, after searching for him in vain, hurried after him in the direction in which he hoped he had gone, but did not overtake him until he had nearly reached the place at which they were to lie that night. On his expressing the anxiety which his absence had caused, the good man calmly replied, "I thought I was the last at the inn, and that the others had set off before me." This habitual recollection in God did not, however, make him less attentive to the interests of others, whom he regarded as the living images of Him with whom his heart was ever occupied. Thus, on returning to Paris, having learned that one of his friends was nigh unto death, he lost not a moment in hastening to his succour, and had the satisfaction, before he expired, of rendering him all those offices which religion and affection alike dictated.

One effect of these journeys or, rather, pilgrimages—for such

they were in their spirit and object—was a marked increase of zeal, devotion, and general spirituality among the clergy wherever he went. The mere sight of him kneeling before the Tabernacle had more influence than many sermons; but neither were sermons wanting, for he preached in several places, though more, perhaps, was effected by private conversations and conferences. His appearance in any town seemed to be a call on the parish priests to arise and sanctify themselves, and his sojourn among them had to not a few all the advantages of a spiritual retreat. The like may be said of many a convent also, in which the extraordinary renewal of fervour among the inmates dated from the hour when M. Olier set foot within its walls.

God's ways are not as man's ways. It might have been thought that a servant so devoted to his Master's interests would have been granted a lengthened term of life, but it had long been revealed to this holy pastor that at the end of ten years his public ministry would close. This was the assurance he had given to several of his priests; but as, at the beginning of the year 1652, there was no appearance of the prediction being verified, one of them said to him, as they were taking the air in the country, "The ten years will have soon expired, yet how can you resign your parish? And, even if you could, ought you to do so?" "It is for God," replied M. Olier, "to fulfil His own words, and accomplish His own designs."

In March his health underwent a considerable declension; rest was the only remedy, but his zeal would not tolerate either repose or abatement of labour. In June the shrine of Ste. Geneviéve was carried in solemn procession to the abbey-church of Notre Dame, and M. Olier, regardless of his enfeebled state, spent the whole night in prayer, with the religious, before the sacred relics. A few days after, he was seized with a violent fever, and such was the intense internal heat from which he suffered that it seemed at times as if his very bed were on fire. His soul meanwhile enjoyed a profound peace, and he never ceased making acts of love, thanksgiving, self-renunciation, and the like. He never prayed to be restored to health, or begged others to make it the subject of their prayers: one thing only he desired—to do simply the will of God. The physicians declared there was no hope of his recovery; M. de Bretonvilliers vowed a forty days' fast to obtain his restoration, but the sick man knew that he was not then to die, and, on hearing that

a pious person of his acquaintance was alarmed about his state, he bade him be told to come and see him, when he said, "Be under no apprehension on my account; the Blessed Virgin has assured me that my end is not yet come; but there is another thing which she has made known to me, and it is a fault you have fallen into in neglecting a certain practice of devotion which was profitable to yourself and pleasing to our Lord." From God alone could this intimation have come, for the person in question assured M. de Bretonvilliers that he had not mentioned the omission to any human being.

But this holy man was accustomed never to take the extraordinary lights with which he was favoured as the rule of his exterior conduct; and, though assured of his recovery, he proceeded to dispose all his affairs as if he were at the point of death. He received the last sacraments, and, on the physicians announcing that he would not live through the morrow, he, on the 20th of June, made a formal resignation of his parish to the Abbé de St. Germain, and of his priory of Bazainville to the Abbé de Marmoutier. In the afternoon of the same day he again dictated to a notary his last will and testament, in which, after declaring his unbounded confidence in the merits of the Redeemer and his tender devotion to His Virgin Mother, he asked pardon of all whom he might have in any way offended, directed that his body should be buried in the church of St. Sulpice, without pomp or ceremony and with the utmost simplicity, seeing that he was nothing but a vile and miserable sinner, made various bequests in favour of old and faithful servants, and, finally, bequeathed his library to the Seminary. No sooner, however, were these formalities completed than his health immediately improved, as though the malady had been sent only to be the occasion of his relinquishing his charge. He had been installed on the 25th of June, 1642, and his resignation took place on the 20th of the same month, 1652: thus was the word of the Lord fulfilled, as His servant had foretold. Another prediction, uttered eight years before, now also received its accomplishment, by the appointment of M. de Bretonvilliers to be his successor as Curé of St. Sulpice, notwithstanding the existence of reasons which, according to that ecclesiastic, rendered such a choice on the part of the Abbé de St. Germain morally impossible.

While all good men were lamenting the loss which the parish would sustain by being deprived of so indefatigable a pastor, M.

Olier was himself filled with grief and confusion, lamenting that by his innumerable faults he had retarded rather than promoted the work of God; and one of his own priests relates that, passing through Lyons a few months after in his company, and happening to kneel on one side of a confessional while M. Olier was kneeling on the other, he heard him accuse himself, in so loud a tone and with so many sobs and tears, of having undertaken the charge of a vast parish while devoid of all the necessary qualifications for so responsible an office, that any one might have supposed he had been guilty of the grossest dereliction of duty; and the confessor was obliged to have recourse to all those consoling topics which religion suggests in order to relieve his fears.

Part III.

THE COMMUNITY AND THE SEMINARY.

CHAPTER I.

GOD'S DESIGN IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SEMINARY.

HITHERTO we have regarded M. Olier simply in his capacity of pastor; he is now to be presented to us in the character by which he is most widely known, and which constitutes his chief title to the gratitude of his countrymen and to the veneration of all Catholics—that of founder and first superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice. This was the office to which he had been specially destined by God, and for which he had been prepared by many singular favours and many extraordinary trials.

A more important office it would be difficult to conceive; for its object was not only to co-operate personally in forming a race of holy priests, in itself one of the sublimest missions with which a human being could be charged, but to found a society which should perpetuate the work he had himself inaugurated. The Oratory which, in the intention of its saintly founder, the Cardinal de Bérulle, was to have accomplished this object, had, as before observed, been diverted, in spite, as it were, of his continued efforts, to other purposes; and, what was more remarkable, his immediate successor, P. de Condren, instead of endeavouring to resume and perfect the founder's design, had felt himself divinely called to prepare a body of ecclesiastics, not of his own community, whom he deemed specially fitted for the work, and just before his death had announced that the time had arrived for carrying the project into effect; while, as if to show to all the world the extraordinary power which the proposed seminary should be capable of exerting, the locality selected for its establishment was one of the most populous and, at the same time, the most demoralised in France. And here, again, the Providence of God was eminently manifested, inasmuch as, the parish of St. Sulpice being situated within the jurisdiction of the Abbey of St. Germain, M. Olier and his colleagues would not have been able even to enter on their pastoral labours had they not obtained the sanction and active concurrence of the Benedictine Superiors, P.

Tarrisse and P. Bataille, who, as we have seen, had themselves introduced into their community the great reform of St. Maur.

M. Olier, indeed, believed that he was commissioned by God to do a work in France analogous to that which the children of St. Benedict had once accomplished in the Church at large, and that he was undertaking it with the special benediction and under the particular patronage of that great Patriarch. "I remember," he writes, "that on Thursday, July 10th, 1642, before we quitted Vaugirard, as I was returning from a walk with our associates, we recited together the office of the translation of St. Benedict, for which I had given them a little special preparation, telling them that it was that great saint who would reform the Church; and, while we were reciting it, I beheld in spirit the whole Court of Heaven observing us and waiting, as it were, to see what we were about to do. At the same time another person who was with us, and is a great servant of God, told me, before I had spoken to him of what I had seen, that he also had been favoured with a similar vision, and added that, not only had he beheld Heaven opened and its hosts looking down upon us, but that the Blessed Trinity Itself seemed to be regarding our company with complacency; and this I think very true, on account of the purity wherein it walks and the zeal wherewith it devotes itself to the service of God. As, then, it pleased our Lord in time gone by to effect a renovation of Christianity by means of St. Benedict, it seems to me that this is about to be done once more, and that it is for this reason He associates me so closely with the Reverend Father-General of that holy Order and with Father Bataille, its Procurator, that we three might be as one in labouring together for the good of the Church. This is why, eighteen months ago, He indicated them to me as my directors, and as those whom His holy Mother destined for me. In former times," he continues, "God was constrained by the ignorance and depravity of the clergy to transfer the priesthood to the cloisters of the Benedictines, who, having shown themselves faithful in rendering to Him the worship which was His due, merited to be called to that sacred ministry and to offer the Holy Sacrifice, not only in their own houses, but throughout the Universal Church, whose dignities, prelacies, bishoprics, and even the Papacy itself, were delivered into their hands.* So many

* At their origin, it must be remembered, the Benedictines were not priests. Thus neither St. Benedict nor St. Maurus were ever invested with the priesthood; as neither were St. Anthony, St. Pacomius, or St. Francis of Assisi.

"Before the opening of the eleventh century the Order of St. Benedict had

Sovereign Pontiffs, so many bishops, so many parish priests belonged to the society and followed the rule of St. Benedict, that for the space of three or four hundred years the clergy became, as it were, merged in the Order of that holy Patriarch. And this is in accordance with God's ordinary dealings, who raises up new servants when the former become unfaithful."

In like manner it was revealed to him that, as St. Benedict had replenished the Church with priests and revivified, as it were, the whole sacerdotal body, so the Seminary which he was commissioned to found was destined to form a race of clergy, not for one particular diocese, but for all the dioceses of the kingdom. "This," he writes, "is why God has established the Seminary in a locality which is not bounded or restricted by any particular jurisdiction; for this parish forms no part of any diocese, but is immediately dependent on the Pope; and they whom he appoints to serve it are, as it were, his members and his delegates, who supply what he is unable to effect in his own person and are wholly dedicated to the service of the Holy See." Thus wrote the founder of St. Sulpice at a time when nothing but a divine assurance could have warranted him in believing that he would succeed in accomplishing what all past experience had shown to be impracticable; at a time, too, when no one was obliged to reside at an ecclesiastical seminary, for however limited a period, in order to obtain a benefice or to be admitted to holy orders. Before the Community had taken up its abode at Vaugirard, Marie Rousseau was complaining one day to God that the ecclesiastics whom He had chosen to be its first members would give no credence to what she had been ordered to tell them—as we have seen was actually the case—when God replied to her in this wise: "I cannot give those who will not believe your words a greater proof of their truth than that they should one day behold My almighty power displayed in the gathering together of My workmen and their establishment at St. Sulpice. I do not say merely that you shall have stones wherewith to construct the buildings they shall inhabit,—that is

founded over 15,000 abbeys, and, up to the time of its division into the two branches of Cluny and Citeaux, had provided the Church with 7,000 Bishops and 24 Popes." Ruskin, *Lecture on the Benedictines.*

"The Benedictine body alone has moulded for the service of the Church 7,000 Archbishops, 15,000 Bishops, 15,000 Abbots, and 4,000 Saints, and has established in different parts of the world more than 37,000 monasteries." Rev. J. S. Vaughan's *Sermon delivered at St. Bede's College, Manchester, on St. Bede's day;* reported in the *Weekly Register*, Nov. 1st, 1884.

nothing; but what I say is that there is no one on earth who has the power to attract from all sides to the church of St. Sulpice such men as I will bring thither to be My sacrificers."

This promise of God, which to human prudence and foresight appeared utterly baseless and extravagant, began to be marvellously fulfilled from the moment that M. Olier transferred his seminary from Vaugirard to Paris. From all parts of the kingdom—even before the design of the new institution was publicly announced—came ecclesiastics of all grades, including abbots, priors, canons, doctors, bachelors in theology, some to prepare themselves by a life of prayer and study for the reception of holy orders, others to imbue and penetrate themselves with the spirit of their vocation, and all to take part in the celebration of the divine offices, like clergy attached to the parish church. Moreover, as the sons of St. Benedict had been promoted to the highest offices in the Church, so, even within ten or twelve years after the establishment of the Seminary, M. Olier was able to state, in a letter to the Sovereign Pontiff, that it had already given many dignitaries, including bishops, to the realm; and, in fact, from that time forward almost all the sees of France have been filled by ecclesiastics who had been trained at St. Sulpice. And again, as the mission of that great Patriarch had been confined to no particular kingdom but had extended through the whole of Christendom, so—to adopt the words which Cardinal Chigi, Legate *a latere* of Pope Alexander VII., employed in a public attestation which he made only a few years after the death of its holy founder—ecclesiastics had flocked to the Seminary of St. Sulpice, not only from neighbouring provinces, but from many other parts of Europe, who, on their return to their own country, distinguished themselves by their fervour and ability in the ministry of the word; "whence," he adds, "it has come to pass that the vine of the Lord diffuses a sweeter odour and brings forth its fruits in greater abundance." Indeed, as is patent to all men, this confluence, once begun, has never ceased to the present day, and every year aspirants to the priesthood present themselves at the gates of the Seminary, uninvited and unannounced, from all quarters of the habitable globe, drawn thither by no prospect of temporal advantage but wholly for the sake of perfecting themselves in the duties and the virtues of their state. So admirably have been verified the assurances with which Marie Rousseau encouraged the first inmates of Vaugirard to persevere in their arduous enterprise, when she said to them, "They will come to this seminary from

every side to seek instruction, and thence they will depart to carry everywhere the light of faith, like so many burning and shining torches, going to the four quarters of the earth to show forth the far-extending sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who died for all men, and everywhere to send souls to heaven. For this house of the Abbé Olier is before God the image of the *cœnaculum* of the Apostles, and they who are to be formed therein will be the riches of the Church and for Rome itself a little treasure."

This is why St. Vincent de Paul regarded M. Olier's undertaking as no merely present and personal affair, but one which concerned the general good and was destined to produce permanent effects. And certainly, when we consider the many storms and disasters, both social and political, which the Seminary has survived, and reflect that at the time it was established there existed in Paris alone numerous communities, venerable for their antiquity and possessed of great authority and influence—as, for instance, that of St. Germain itself—all of which have utterly disappeared, we cannot but recognise in its preservation to the present day the fulfilment of the promise which the Blessed Virgin made to her devoted client, that she would watch over his work as being specially her own, and guard it with her powerful protection. M. Faillon mentions as a remarkable circumstance that, when the buildings erected by M. Olier were demolished at the beginning of the present century on grounds of public utility, the civil power caused them to be constructed anew, at its own sole expense, nearly on the site which they originally occupied, and even bestowed on the Seminary a legal recognition and authorization such as it had not possessed from the date of the general destruction of ecclesiastical communities in France. Nay further, so great was the respect still entertained for M. Olier, that at a time when a belief in the supernatural had well-nigh died out of the hearts of Frenchmen, and they who held the reins of government were too apt to regard religion as a mere engine of State policy, the Minister of the Interior, in the name of the First Consul, ordered a medal of gold to be placed under the first stone of the new edifice on which was a figure of the Blessed Mother of God, with this inscription: *Cum ipsa, et in ipsa, et per ipsam, omnis ædificatio crescit in templum Dei.** A similar medal M. Olier had himself deposited under the foundations of the first and original building, to

* "With her, and in her, and through her, every building grows into a temple of God." The first stone was laid on November 20th, 1802.

signify his entire dependence on the protection of his heavenly Benefactress and the paramount influence which he desired that she should ever exercise over the house and its inmates.

The principal end for which the French Oratory had been founded was, as Pope Paul V. declared in his Bull of Institution, "not so much to provide ecclesiastics with learning and science as to train them in the worthy use thereof"—for their own sanctification and that of others—"and to impart to them the virtues proper to the ecclesiastical state." The Seminary of St. Sulpice, therefore, being destined in the counsels of God to accomplish the object which the Oratory had failed to realize, was not directly commissioned to form brilliant scholars and great doctors in theology. The Church of France in the 17th century was richly adorned with men distinguished for erudition and culture; what she needed was a race of ecclesiastics animated with the true spirit of their order, who by their fervour and zeal should awaken the slumbering fires of piety among the more learned members of their body. Even before M. Olier quitted Vaugirard it had been intimated to him by God that this was included in the office which he was called to fulfil. "The second way," he writes, "which the Divine Majesty shows me for re-animating Christian piety,—in other words, for promoting the sanctification of doctors and priests,—is to import the maxims of Christianity into the Sorbonne by means of the young ecclesiastics who dwell with us, and whom God will inspire with the zeal necessary for this end. It seems to me that it is the will of God to bring about a Christian renovation through the instrumentality of the doctors; and, indeed, if only three persons should maintain the Christian verities in the schools, the other doctors would take a pleasure in studying them and afterwards in disseminating them to the honour of Jesus Christ and the glory of His Father. I have a supreme confidence that this will actually be the case, and that our young men will attract hearers more by their humility, piety, and devotion than by the disputations in which they engage." How amply these convictions were by the Divine Goodness verified will appear in the sequel.

Further, the Seminary of St. Sulpice, in the intention of its founder, was to be a model and precedent for all other similar institutions in France and elsewhere, as regards both their organization and their character and spirit. Thus, previously to taking charge of his parish, M. Olier had written in his *Mémoires*, "God

has made known to me that He desires to establish here a seminary which shall be a model for other dioceses and kingdoms." True it is that in the preceding century St. Charles Borromeo had laboured strenuously and with success in founding schools in which youthful candidates for the priesthood might be trained in preparation for the clerical state. But God, in His ordinary Providence, is pleased to work out His designs by progressive acts and with the aid of various instruments, and thus it was left to M. Olier to develope and complete what the great Archbishop had begun. The seminaries which the latter had instituted in his diocese were regulated and conducted in a manner conformable with the years and capacities of the students, but they were not adapted to meet the necessities of persons of maturer age, whose characters were more solidly formed, who had either already received holy orders or were in a condition to do so, and who were desirous, not only of imbibing more deeply the spirit of their vocation, but of perfecting themselves in those virtues which are eminently sacerdotal. And here it may be observed that, although the Bishops of France were fully acquainted with the regulations which were embodied in the Acts of the Church of Milan, they had not regarded them as suited to the purposes of a higher seminary, and were still in quest—if the term may be permitted—of a system which would adequately satisfy their requirements; and such a system was at length supplied them by the founder of St. Sulpice. M. Olier, who entertained a profound veneration for St. Charles and proposed him as a model to his community,* adopted whatever in the Milanese rules he deemed conducive to the object he had in view, as, in fact, he himself declared in the General Assembly of the Clergy held in 1650; nevertheless he felt constrained to frame his constitutions on quite

* M. Olier had the consolation of leaving behind him at his decease disciples who exhibited in themselves something of the spirit which animated the great Archbishop and, in particular, his habitual love and practice of prayer. Thus we read that M. de Bretonvilliers and M. Bourbon, on their way through Milan, repaired at once to the shrine of St. Charles, and, while they were engaged in prayer, one of the canons opened the tomb in which the precious body lay in order that they might have a near view of it. But, absorbed in their devotions, the two Sulpicians never so much as raised their eyes, but continued praying for the space of three hours; so that the ecclesiastics present, who were used to seeing pilgrims eager to enjoy so great a privilege, were struck with astonishment, and, on learning who they were, exclaimed, "We possess, indeed, the body of the Saint, but we must needs confess that in France you have his spirit."

a different plan, in accordance with the pattern which had been shown him in his communings with God.

One principal object for which, in the Providence of God, the Seminary was instituted was to renew those sentiments of veneration and submission to the Sovereign Pontiff, and, under him, to the Bishops, which had become so lamentably impaired by the heresies of the preceding century, not only among the laity, but even in the clerical body itself. "The Seminary of St. Sulpice," wrote M. Olier, "is a place designed to inculcate a spirit of reverence, love, and obedience to the clergy of the Church, whose sovereignty resides in the person of the successor of St. Peter and (proportionately) in their Lordships the Prelates;" and these dispositions he insisted upon as absolutely essential in priests and in all ecclesiastics for the perfect exercise of their divine ministry, inasmuch as Pope and Prelates were the representatives of Jesus Christ Himself, whom they obeyed in obeying them. So strictly, indeed (as we have seen), did he himself act upon the principles he laid down that, although the Abbé de St. Germain was but a simple layman, yet, because the faubourg in which the Seminary was situated was under his immediate jurisdiction, he paid him the same deference as though he had been invested with the episcopal character; for in honouring him he considered that he was only rendering due reverence to the Pope, whom the Abbé represented. "The true Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice," he said, "is our Holy Father the Pope, whom Divine Providence has given us to honour in the person of the Abbé de St. Germain, on whom the Holy See has bestowed jurisdiction over this faubourg without conferring on him the episcopal character, seeming thus to give him a participation in the quality of bishop within this domain. Other seminaries are bound to their Lordships the Bishops, who, by their divine character, are so many sacred sources whence the life of God is dispensed to their clergy; but that of St. Sulpice is bound, by the ordinance of God, to the divine Apostolate of St. Peter, that it may imbibe his spirit and have a share in that plenitude, that essential life, which is possessed by his successor in order to its being distributed through the whole world." But, independently of this peculiar privilege, which was but of a temporary order, he strove to inspire his community with a high sense of the divine prerogatives with which the Sovereign Pontiff is endowed. His teachings on this subject are so lucid and so profound that it will be well to exhibit them at some length.

"I have learned," he wrote, "that the grace of the Apostolate resides in the person of the Pope alone. The Apostles were sent to the whole world, and wherever they went they founded fresh Churches; but these Churches were not connected with each other in the way of dependence, except so far as they were all subject to St. Peter, in whose Apostolate they laboured. This must be held as certain. Each of the Apostles had a number of disciples whom he gave for bishops to the Churches he had begotten, like a father who provides husbands for his daughters. The jurisdiction of these bishops did not extend beyond their own Churches; and, having thus received their order, their power, and their mission from this sublime dignity, they remained always subject thereto in their administration, as the Epistles of the Apostles testify. St. Paul, writing to his dear disciple Timothy, whom he had made bishop, addresses him as his scholar; and so also, in like manner, Titus. St. John, who had founded and was still ruling all the Churches of Asia, writes to his disciples as a master, and speaks to them in the power of Jesus Christ, in whom he lives, as if he were Jesus Christ Himself; so that we behold a prime mover (that is, Jesus Christ) giving life to all things in the person of the Apostles. Now, this high dignity of Apostle has remained by succession in the person of the Popes; St. Peter being the only Apostle who has had successors. Through them, then, it is that we receive the Apostolic benediction, because the spirit of the Apostles has been left to them that they might send preachers to spread abroad the name of God throughout the earth and save all mankind. Whence it comes that to them it belongs to send missionaries to go and preach in barbarous lands and among unbelieving peoples, as having jurisdiction over them. Whence also he who sits in the chair of St. Peter is called Pope or Holy Father, to mark that in him is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is the sole Father of the Church or of the age to come.

"It is, then, in order to vivify and rule His Church even to the consummation of the ages that Jesus Christ has bequeathed Himself to St. Peter and his successors, in whom alone the Apostolic mission is continued and endures, to which is joined infallibility, with obligation laid on all men to receive their teaching. This is why, through Jesus Christ living in them, the successors of St. Peter are the foundation, the basis, of the Church, and the hypostasis which sustains it. As the Hypostasis, or Person, of the Word sustains the

Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, so (analogously) does the Light of Jesus Christ, which is the Light of the Eternal Father, sustain the whole Church in the successor of St. Peter. What could uphold this huge, this immense structure, which occupies the whole earth and is destined to outlast all time, save the infinite Wisdom of God and this Subsistence of the Word? What could supply light to a whole world, as is the Church, unless it be the Sun of Justice? What would be capable of resisting all the illusions, all the errors, all the heresies, all the lies of Hell save Incarnate Wisdom, which has established Itself in St. Peter, as in a rock that cannot be moved, manifesting Itself in him by the steadfastness of his light and the inflexible uprightness of his principles. So that the Sovereign Pontiff has no need to go begging for the aid of science. If he associates Fathers and Prelates with himself, it is as a confession of human frailty and weakness, which he must needs keep in mind, yet without seeking light anywhere but in himself. St. Peter had this prerogative beyond the other Apostles, to have heard from the mouth of Jesus Christ these words: '*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven;*'* and this by a providential dispensation, in order to confirm the Church and fortify it in its faith. The Apostolate of St. Peter having remained by succession in the person of the Popes, being a charge inseparably attached to the Church, as its foundation, it is Peter who gives strength to the whole Church: '*and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren;*' † the faith and the truth are so strong in him that, to express a true belief, an assured faith, it is sufficient to say, 'I believe with St. Peter, I believe as St. Peter.'"

But, if M. Olier thus magnified the divine prerogatives of the Vicar of Christ, it was without derogation to those of the Bishops, who are indispensable members of the sacred hierarchy, of which the Pope is the head. The Church without Bishops, or with their powers curtailed, would be a head without limbs or a body with mutilated organs. No one ever spoke more loftily or more grandly of the Episcopate, or of the necessity of exalting it before the world, than did he in his "Proposal for the Establishment of a Seminary," of which we shall speak more fully further on.

"The Episcopal dignity," he said, "is now in a state of strange contempt, being ignored by Christians and by priests, to whom sub-

* St. Matthew xvi. 17. † St. Luke xxii. 32.

mission to their prelates is a novel idea. No longer mindful of the vow they have solemnly made, priests look upon it as a singular devotion to acknowledge their Bishop as their personal superior, going so far as to represent such proceeding as an heroic act of supererogation. Strange blindness this on their part: inasmuch as Bishops are instituted by God, by special consecration, to be the necessary chiefs, the fathers, and the rulers of their Churches and particularly of their clergy. To them God has given the receiving of life, to others the dispensing and distributing of it; but this distribution necessarily requires channels duly prepared and adjusted for conveying it from its source; and these channels are the priests, who are indissolubly bound to their Bishop, according as Jesus Christ constituted them at the first formation of the clergy. This order, worthy of the wisdom and the providence of a God, could not be replaced by any other invention without loss and general ruin to the Church, which, however, God has promised to preserve unchangeable in its conduct, immovable in its faith, and immortal in its life; to which also He has promised to be ever personally present, to guide it and to animate it even to the consummation of the ages; and that, too, through the sacred orders of its divine hierarchy."

He then proceeds to say that to this very end was the Seminary of St. Sulpice established, to inspire the clergy with love and reverence for their bishops, on whom they absolutely depended, as being their veritable fathers and natural heads. "The Church," he continues, "will never be fully sanctified, and never has been, save through the influence of my Lords the Bishops, who, like so many sacred sources, communicate life and power to their priests, and then through the priests and in the priests to their people."

Such, then, were the designs of God in regard to the Seminary of His predilection; we have now briefly to advert to certain noticeable circumstances which attended their fulfilment.

All the great works which God has specially blessed and which were destined to have extraordinary results have at their beginning been encompassed with difficulties and trials; and of these poverty has invariably been among the principal. The Christian Church itself was founded by poor men; and poverty, including the apparent absence of all material resources, has marked the rise and early life of all the grand monastic Orders. It pleased the Divine Majesty, therefore, that the great institution which M. Olier was deputed to establish should be commenced under similar circum-

stances. We have seen what an amount of discomfort and privation the Community had to undergo at Vaugirard, and for the first eight or ten years it fared scarcely better at St. Sulpice. The funds that were available, from whatever source, hardly sufficed for the support of the Seminary. Such of the inmates as were possessed of the necessary means paid a certain sum for their maintenance, and each of the Directors made a similar contribution. From the first, however, M. Olier dispensed with all payment in the case of those who were poor in this world's goods but in whom he discerned a true vocation for the ecclesiastical state; he further supplied them with both clothes and books, and with whatever was requisite for their subsistence and instruction; and this, too, while personally he was living a life of hard endurance and of straitest poverty. The fare provided for the common table was of the plainest and most ordinary kind, and so completely had the pride of social caste been trodden under foot that M. de Foix, who was Superior of the Seminary, would, in an excess of fervour, have made the servants of the house seat themselves at table with the rest, but that he was led to understand that, without detracting from the merits of the lowliest humility, prudence demanded that every one should abide in that rank of life wherein it had pleased God to place him.

So strictly was the rule of poverty enforced that, as in the Community so also in the Seminary, it was forbidden, not only to solicit contributions, but even to visit any one with the view, or with the mere expectation, of obtaining pecuniary aid. God had engaged to provide for the members of the Institute, and to take a single step or to utter a single word in their own behalf was to be unfaithful to their mission and to ruin their vocation. The Directors were to receive into the house only as many as could be supported with the help of the ordinary means which they possessed, or with which they might justly hope to be supplied; but if, nevertheless, they found themselves in straits, they were to retrench their own expenditure in every possible way rather than apply to externs for relief. The consequences of this self-denying course were not long in declaring themselves, for at the beginning of the year 1643 all ordinary resources seemed to have failed; the revenues were consumed, large debts had been contracted, and there was difficulty even in finding money wherewith to procure the necessary provisions for the house. A trial so severe to persons who had been accustomed to a sufficiency and even to an abundance of the staple commoditie

of life—although it wrought in some that contempt for the world and worldly goods which it was God's design to produce in those whom He had chosen to be the representatives of His Son and the shepherds of His people—became to others who were not possessed of the same implicit confidence in His fatherly care the occasion of great discouragement; to such a degree, indeed, that M. Olier judged it prudent to conceal from them the extreme necessity to which the Seminary was at length reduced. Even M. de Foix, who, owing to his official position, was acquainted with the actual state of affairs, was not exempt from the temptation to distrust. Finding himself destitute of funds, and knowing that all parochial proceeds (as before related) were to be applied to the support of the clergy who served the church and for the benefit of the poor, he well-nigh lost all heart, and feared that the Seminary would have to be dissolved and the work to which he had devoted himself be abandoned. But when things were seemingly at their worst, God, as always happened, came to their succour in a marvellous manner, and they were able to subsist from day to day until their usual revenues were again available.

In the midst of these perplexing trials the Community had to encounter another temptation, subtle and alluring, to have yielded to which would have drawn them away from the objects of their mission, and entailed the extinction of their holy enterprise. From his first installation at St. Sulpice M. Olier, whose zeal and Apostolic life had won the confidence of all good and earnest people, especially of such as aspired to perfection, was urgently requested to take the spiritual direction of several religious houses and, indeed, to govern them in the capacity of superior. The Mère Marie Alvequin, who was superioress and reformer of the Dames Augustines de St. Magloire, employed the director of the community, M. Jean Poincheval, a man of remarkable sagacity as well as humility, who had refused the office of confessor to Louis XIII., to intercede with the man of God in her behalf. This holy priest, who was himself under M. Olier's direction, persevered for the space of three years in soliciting him to undertake the charge, insisting strongly on the spiritual necessities of the religious, who, for their part, anxiously desired the benefit of his counsels. Three other ecclesiastics, who, in conjunction with M. Olier, were the mainstays of the rising institute, as they had also been his first associates and coadjutors at Vaugirard—M. de Foix, M. du Ferrier,

and another, who was, no doubt, M. Picoté,—were similarly importuned, and frequent attempts were also made to engage them in various works which had no connection with their proper duties. But all these endeavours were fruitless. M. Olier and his colleagues would not be diverted from their purpose and consent to embarrass themselves with employments which, however important in themselves, were alien to the mission which God had entrusted to them. The needs of the vast parish, their own individual sanctification, and the constant care and attention which the Seminary demanded, absorbed all their time and all their energies; and to this determination the Community of St. Sulpice has continued faithfully to adhere.

For the space of three years the Jansenistic faction attempted to inoculate the students, and especially such among them as showed signs of ardent piety, with the virus of their maxims and principles, but all their crafty wiles were defeated, as we have seen, by the vigilance of M. Olier, under whose wise direction the seminarists rendered an account of their method of prayer and of their whole interior life with the utmost sincerity and candour. One sole unhappy exception there was in the person of M. Gondrin, already mentioned as being among the first who joined the little community at Vaugirard. Flattered by the sectaries in his ambitious designs, he practised extraordinary mortifications in an ostentatious manner with a view to gaining a reputation for sanctity. In vain did M. Olier insist that in the Seminary no singularity was allowable, and that every one must conform to the rules and usages of the institute; he refused to obey his superiors, or to renounce his fantastical practices, and was accordingly dismissed the house, as being unfitted for the ecclesiastical state. Through the instrumentality, however, of interested friends, who recommended him to the Queen Regent as a person of rare virtue and austerity of life, he was nominated, in the year 1645, to the coadjutorship of the see of Sens, there to abuse the royal patronage and sap the vital interests of religion by becoming an avowed protector of the Jansenistic party. This was the utmost success which these agents of darkness were ever able to achieve against the young community by all their cunningly contrived plots and stratagems.

CHAPTER II.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SEMINARY. ITS INTERIOR SPIRIT.

ON first taking possession of his parish M. Olier had removed his ecclesiastical students from Vaugirard to Paris, and had lodged them at the Presbytery. But shortly after, as their number increased, he hired an adjacent house, named, from an image of the Blessed Virgin over the door, La Belle Image, the garden of which communicated with the Presbytery, and transferred thither all who were in the inferior orders, while such as were already priests remained with the clergy who served the church. He continued to preside as head over both houses, but for the maintenance of order and discipline he made M. de Foix Superior of what may henceforth be called the Seminary and M. du Ferrier Superior of the Community. On account, however, of the close proximity of the two houses the seminarists and the other clergy performed their religious exercises in common and had their meals at the same table. "This state of things," says M. Faillon, "probably lasted till the Abbé de Foix was promoted to the bishopric of Pamiers, which took place in the early part of 1645."

About this time, however, the numbers had become so great that M. Olier resolved to re-establish the seminary at Vaugirard, particularly as the daily resort of the students to the Presbytery interfered with their due observance of the rules. To Vaugirard, accordingly, he sent the youngest clerics and last comers, there to be exercised for a year in the practices of the interior life before being instructed and prepared for the reception of holy orders. M. Couderc, the elder, was set over this house, but M. Olier visited them personally every week to confirm them in their resolutions and communicate to them something of that spirit of self-despoilment which is the surest sign of a priestly vocation and for which

he was himself so signally distinguished. They were forbidden to leave the precincts or to visit or receive acquaintance without express permission of the Superior; on every Sunday and festival they assisted at the offices in the parish church, and so striking was the piety and recollection they evinced that they were a source of edification to all who saw them. In the October of 1645 Marie Rousseau was present at Vespers in the church of Vaugirard, and, while the students were chanting the Psalms and taking part in the ceremonies, it was shown her by a divine intimation that their fervour was a consolation to the Heart of Jesus, from its contrast with the coldness and neglect with which He had heretofore been treated in that place. "I have brought these children here," He said, "that I might have some solace to My wounds." There was, indeed, she adds, a certain relaxation of devotion in the following year, but M. Olier's visits and counsels soon rekindled their former ardours.

The additional accommodation thus afforded was, however, not sufficient to supply the growing needs, and it became necessary to provide a lodging for these clerics when they should return to Paris to complete their studies and to make their special preparation for receiving holy orders. In the year 1645, as the reader may remember, M. Olier had purchased a plot of ground in close vicinity to the church, on which to erect a large and commodious seminary. Owing, however, to his multiplied occupations, the breaking out of civil war, and, above all, the utter want of means, he was unable to make even a commencement. Meanwhile he caused three small buildings which already existed on the spot to be put into a habitable condition at as little outlay as possible. This was effected by making divisions in the rooms and constructing little cells even in the garrets by means of deal partitions, and at the end of a few months the seminarists, with M. Poussé at their head, were able to take possession.

This domicile was formally blessed on May 11th, 1646, and, while engaged in supplicating God that He would be pleased to pour down His benedictions on a house from which the spirit of evil had been banished, M. Olier felt himself diverted, against his will, from the subject of his prayer and moved to beg with all the powers of his soul for the grace of perfect servitude, and at the same time he seemed to be so replenished therewith that he became, as it were, annihilated before the Divine Majesty. Then it was, he says,

as if the plan of a great edifice were spread before him, and an interior voice said to him, "I place this house in thy hands; thou wilt answer to Me for it." A similar illumination was accorded to him, on June 23rd in the same year, while disposing himself for saying the first Mass in a chapel dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, which, with permission of the Abbé de St. Germain, he had erected in connection with the Seminary; the Lord God making known to him by a secret operation of His Spirit that he should offer the Holy Sacrifice with the single intention of promoting His glory, inasmuch as this chapel and the Seminary itself were designed for the same sole object.

The house or, rather, junction of houses which now constituted the Seminary of St. Sulpice soon became in its turn insufficient for the accommodation of the students, who, moreover, owing to the smallness of the rooms and the slightness of the partitions, especially in the garrets, suffered much both from heat in summer and from cold in winter; indeed, the health of some was seriously affected through defect of ventilation. Under these circumstances, being utterly destitute of all human resources, he besought the aid of Her who had never failed him in his needs, and confidently awaited the time when she should be pleased to bestow it. Nor was it long before he was favoured with an extraordinary proof of her regard. It was during the short period of repose which the capital enjoyed after the troubles of the first War of Paris that, on Monday, March 22nd, 1649, he went, accompanied by M. de Bretonvilliers, to lay his pressing wants before his heavenly Patroness in the church of Notre Dame. As they knelt together in prayer he was rapt in ecstasy, and beheld the Blessed Mother of God standing before him and holding in her hands the model of a building much greater in extent than any which he had contemplated, and perfectly adapted to his purpose. Knowing, however, that he did not possess wherewithal to undertake so vast a work he prayed her to entrust it to his companion kneeling at his side, but she gave him to understand that it was himself whom she had chosen for its execution. Then, nothing doubting but that, having engaged him in the undertaking, she would herself assist him to accomplish it, he at once determined on fulfilling her behests, undeterred alike by his total want of funds and by the taunts of those who ridiculed the notion of a man who had no money and no resources at command presuming to commence a building on so large a scale. In this, as in all he undertook, he trusted simply in

God and in His holy Mother and placed no reliance on human succour. A lady of high rank, who had promised him a considerable sum, changed her mind and withdrew her offer, but, instead of evincing any disappointment, he gave open expression to his satisfaction at being obliged to have recourse solely to Jesus and Mary. "To Them," he said, "the house belongs; They will not abandon it, but will provide whatever is necessary for its construction." He refused on one occasion 60,000 livres, and on another 80,000 livres, because the donation was coupled with a condition which fell short, in his judgment, of the greatest excellence, and so was contrary to the vow which he had made always to choose the most perfect way. An instance also is recorded of his declining to accept a sum of money which was brought him, and begging the donor first to pray to God that he might clearly know His will.

M. du Ferrier, in his *Mémoires*, relates a remarkable incident, as showing that it was God's will that the Community should depend on Him alone and not look to mundane means for help. A person of wealth and standing came to him one day and said that he had a project in contemplation which would be a great advantage to the King and to the city of Paris, and that, if M. du Ferrier would secure the interest of M. de Brienne, Secretary of State, in his behalf, he in return would render M. du Ferrier a substantial service. On the latter replying that he never meddled with temporal matters and received no presents, the other rejoined that what he proposed would be to the benefit both of the parish and of the Seminary. He then disclosed his plan, which was that, the King having determined to include certain faubourgs and, among them, that of St. Sulpice within the walls of the city, he would himself engage to construct the fortifications and execute other important works besides, provided he were entrusted with the sole control of the revenues of the Hotel de Ville, which he affirmed were so badly administered as to be productive of public loss, and that, if his request were granted, he on his part would undertake to enlarge the parish church and erect the Seminary, as designed, at his own expense. An offer so unexpected and so munificent appeared a very Godsend in the eyes of M. du Ferrier, who was thoroughly acquainted with the condition of affairs, and he consequently believed himself justified in recommending the proposal to M. Brienne, with whom he had much personal influence. The applicant was able to produce good security, and, the plan on examination being found feasible, his offer was formally accepted by

the Council of State. Thus far all had proceeded smoothly, and the Community were congratulating themselves that by the good Providence of God they were relieved of all anxieties and the work to which they had dedicated their lives would now be consummated, when, eight days afterwards, the whole affair collapsed. The Duc d'Orléans, who was President of the Council, exacted, as the condition of his giving his consent, that the completion of his Palace of the Luxembourg should be included in the contract, and, when the applicant had reluctantly consented, the Prince de Condé put in a corresponding claim of so preposterous a nature that the whole scheme was abandoned and came to naught. By this failure of a plan which was apparently so promising, but which proved in effect so utterly vain and empty, God (adds M. du Ferrier) would have them to understand that, as the site had been purchased with money supplied by members of the Community, so the Seminary itself should be erected and maintained by themselves alone without external help.

At the time, however, that the Blessed Virgin laid her charge upon her servant no member of the Community was in a position to render any pecuniary assistance, inasmuch as they had expended all their resources on their parishioners, many of whom were reduced to a state of destitution by the disastrous civil war. M. Olier nevertheless was in no wise daunted or discouraged, and the event proved that his confidence rested on a sure foundation. Two young men, brothers, of the name of Souart, who had quitted the Luxembourg, where their family were attached to the person of the Duc d'Orléans, and had joined the Community of St. Sulpice, contributed, with the consent of their relatives, a sum which was sufficient to defray the expense of laying the foundations; and no sooner had the works proceeded thus far than the good Providence of God enabled another of the associates to furnish what was necessary for the completion of the structure. It has been related how, when M. Olier was praying together with M. de Bretonvilliers in the cathedral of Notre Dame, he had begged the Virgin Mother to entrust the undertaking to his companion kneeling at his side; and now it appeared as if his petition had in part, at least, been granted. For just at the moment when additional funds were needed, M. de Bretonvilliers inherited a considerable amount of property through the death of several relatives, with the aid of which the works were never allowed to stop, but advanced with a celerity which to those who were acquainted

with the poverty of the Community must have been astonishing. So confident, indeed, was M. Olier of receiving the assistance he required that, even while the foundations were being laid and before M. de Bretonvilliers had any money at his disposal, the man of God —as though he were favoured with a revelation on the subject—had induced him to promise, in conjunction with his two brothers, to provide a habitation for the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had been established at La Flêche in Anjou by his friend M. Le Royer de la Dauversière; and accordingly, on September 22nd in this same year, 1649, M. de Bretonvilliers signed a contract for the execution of the plans which the Sisters had adopted.

The first stone of the Seminary was solemnly laid by M. Olier himself, in the name of her whom he loved to style Queen of the Clergy, on the octave of her Nativity. The architect whom he employed was Jacques Le Mercier, the same who had extended the Louvre, and had erected the Palais Royal and the Church of the Sorbonne. As the building was to be consecrated to the Divine service, M. Olier took the greatest care that all the materials should be the best of their kind: he would have everything solid and substantial, but of the utmost simplicity, without superfluous ornament or display; and, finding that without his knowledge the entablature had begun to be enriched with fretwork, he ordered the decoration to be discontinued on the side that faced the street, without regard to the beauty or uniformity of the appearance. The building of the Seminary afforded work for a large number of people who, deprived of employment by the disorders of the times, would have been the terror of the city; and so rapid was the progress made that by the feast of the Assumption, 1650, the edifice was well-nigh completed. It consisted of a massive square, enclosing a noble court and pierced with numerous windows; and such was the solidity of the whole structure that during the 150 years it remained standing no repairs were needed, not even in the roof.* The chapel, which by M.

* Eventually several establishments were formed in connection with the Seminary and communicating with it. 1. The Petite Communauté, for students whose health did not allow them to follow the general rule. 2. The Petit Séminaire, for those who could not afford the usual *pension;* it was founded by M. Brenier, who also instituted the Communauté des Philosophes, which prepared students for both the Grand and the Petit Séminaire. 3. The Communauté des Pauvres Écoliers, which subsequently took the name des Robertins from M. Robert, one of its Superiors, who largely endowed it. All had their country houses; the Grand Séminaire at Issy, as at the present day; the Petit Séminaire at Vaugirard,

Olier's desire was finished before the rest of the building, was consecrated in the November of the same year, the first Mass being celebrated by the Papal Nuncio, who, on the feast of the Assumption, 1651, solemnly blessed the Seminary itself. But the servant of God had already made a formal dedication of the new institution to the Queen of Heaven. In the cathedral church of Chartres, where, as we have seen, he had received such singular intimations of the Divine will, he offered the Holy Sacrifice at her altar, having with him the keys of the all but completed building, and there he prayed the Virgin Mother to take possession of the house which she had herself designed and to bestow upon it her patronage and protection. At the same time he presented her image with a costly robe of silk embroidered with gold, which his biographer says is still preserved among the treasures of the church; and, in order to bequeath to the Seminary a perpetual devotion to Our Lady of Chartres, he obtained for it the privilege of being associated with the Chapter of the Cathedral, and so being admitted to a community of prayer and spiritual graces.* He would never allow any one to apply to him the title of founder. "You know," he would say, "that it is Jesus in His holy Mother who is the founder and the owner of this house." To this end he placed in the centre of the court a statue of its heavenly Patroness, who was represented seated, with the Divine Child standing on her knees and placing a crown upon her head; and everywhere about the house might be seen the monogram of Mary, not only on every door and window, but on all the furniture, ironwork, and linen. But it was in the chapel especially that his devotion found its chief gratification. If he was pleased to have the rest of the building a model of plainness and simplicity, here he would have the utmost magnificence displayed. The most skilful artists were employed in its embellishment, and with such success that, when completed, the chapel of St. Sulpice was reckoned among the finest ornaments of the city. That which attracted most admiration was the celebrated composition of Le Brun with which the ceiling was covered, and which was

where the Robertins also had M. Olier's house, near the church; the Philosophers again at Issy. The building erected by M. Olier was taken down in 1802, in order to throw open the Place de St. Sulpice, and a new seminary constructed on the site which had been occupied by the three other establishments, a portion of the garden of the Grand Séminaire, the community of the Sœurs de l'Instruction, and some adjoining houses.

* The custom of visiting Notre Dame de Chartres has continued in the Seminary to the present day.

executed after a design furnished by M. Olier himself. It was descriptive of the triumph of the Blessed Virgin, crowned by the Eternal Father amidst the jubilations of the whole Court of Heaven, and proclaimed Mother of God by the great council of Ephesus; the spaces between the painting and the cornice being filled with medallions representing the several titles by which she is invoked in her Litanies.

But this devotional beauty and adornment, combined with so much architectural modesty, solidity, and plainness, did but express the dominant idea and interior life and spirit of the Institute; and these we have now to consider. The Seminary, it must be borne in mind, was the one great object of M. Olier's mission in the world, the true end of his vocation. To this all his previous life was but the preparation and the prelude. The plan which had been shown him by the Blessed Virgin he did not take merely as the model of the material building which it was the Divine Will he should construct, but he understood the heavenly vision as importing that the spiritual edifice was to be raised according to a pattern which God had designed, and which P. de Condren had so often obscurely intimated to his disciples. "When God," said M. Olier, "would renew in these days the fervour of primitive Christianity, He would employ the same means as He made use of at the first. It was by Jesus Christ that He made Himself known to men; and, as it was not the design of the Eternal Father to manifest His Son visibly to all the earth, He multiplied and disseminated Him in the Apostles, who, filled with His Spirit, His virtues, and His power, bore Him with them everywhere throughout the world, displaying exteriorly in their persons His patience, His humility, His sweetness, His charity, and all His virtues. To correspond, then, with the design of God we must inspire our youth with the sentiments and virtues of Jesus Christ, and He must live in each as really as in the Apostle who said, '*I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.*'"*

Such, then, is the fundamental idea on which the Seminary of St. Sulpice rested, devotion to the Interior Life of our Lord,—a devotion established and perpetuated by the institution of a festival so designated, which was celebrated annually and, during a large portion of the year, even weekly. The object of this festival was to honour with a special devotion the interior dispositions with which our Lord accompanied His mysteries and all the actions of His life; as, for instance, His sentiments of piety towards His Father, of charity

* Gal. ii. 20.

towards men, self-annihilation in His own regard, horror of the world and of sin; and the fruit to be derived from this devotion was an abundant participation in these dispositions, according to the admonition of St. Paul: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*"* To reproduce this interior life in the hearts of the seminarists was M. Olier's one unceasing object, as being the proper vocation of all Christians, and especially of priests. "Then only," he said, "are men worthy of these august titles when it can be affirmed of them, It is thus Jesus Christ spoke; it is thus Jesus Christ acted; it is thus Jesus Christ suffered." And this has ever been the primary teaching in the Seminary of St. Sulpice. "We are for ever repeating," writes M. Leschassier, "those words of St. Ambrose:—'*Omnia Christus est nobis: signaculum in fronte, ut semper confiteamur; signaculum in corde, ut semper diligamus; signaculum in brachio, ut semper operemur.*'† How widely should we have departed from the spirit of our fathers, if we abandoned the holy practice signified by these three expressions: '*Per Christum, cum Christo, in Christo*—(Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ)!'"

Next to the devotion to the Interior Life of Jesus, M. Olier laid as the second foundation of his Seminary devotion to the interior life of Mary, a festival in honour of which was also observed every year. It had for its principal object the interior dispositions of this incomparable creature in all her actions, and the treasure of graces with which she was enriched. "Jesus Christ," he writes, "who promised to live in holy souls, communicated His life to no one with such plenitude as to His holy Mother. The communication which He makes to the whole body of the Church is far inferior to it. Mary is as a sacrament by which He distributes His blessings and His graces; and it is to this abundant source that the clergy must resort in order to imbibe the life of Jesus Christ. St. John beheld all this: he represents the most holy Virgin as a woman clothed with the sun, having on her head a crown of twelve stars, emblem of the Apostles, and the moon under her feet;‡ teaching us thereby that, wholly filled and penetrated with Jesus Christ, figured by the sun, she fills in her turn all the Apostles and

* Phil. ii. 6.

† "Christ is all things to us; a seal on the forehead, that we may ever confess; a seal in the heart, that we may ever love; a seal on the arm, that we may ever work."

‡ Apoc. xii. 1.

the Church, and gives them all that they have of light and splendour. She is shown, also, with the dragon under her feet; and this is to denote that all the Apostles, the disciples, the priests, and the other ministers of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, even to the exorcists, hold and receive from Jesus Christ, in her, the power to trample the serpent under foot and crush his head. In accordance with this design, it pleased God that, although His holy Mother was not present at the Last Supper, inasmuch as she was not to receive the visible priesthood according to the order of Melchisedech, nevertheless she should be present in the *cœnaculum* on Whitsunday, there to receive the Apostolic grace and spirit; that is to say, the spirit of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men; thereby teaching the Church that it could never be renewed save in the company of Mary and by participating in her spirit."

To keep this great and beautiful truth ever before the minds and, as it were, before the very eyes of the students, he placed in the chapel a large painting by Le Brun, representing the Queen of the Clergy receiving the plenitude of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which from her is distributed among the Apostles and the assembled faithful. His wish was to have had ten other pictures executed by the same artist, the designs for which he communicated to him in writing, all intended to exhibit the Mother of God as the channel and instrument of all graces in the Church; but one only was completed, that of the Visitation, in which mystery the Blessed Virgin exercised her Apostolate in behalf of St. John the Baptist and St. Elizabeth.

This doctrine was not, indeed, peculiar to the founder of St. Sulpice. Bossuet and Bourdaloue regard it simply as the consequence of the mystery of the Incarnation itself. "God," says the former, "having been pleased to give us Jesus Christ once, and by the Most Holy Virgin, this order changes no more. Having once received by her the universal principle of grace, we also receive, through her instrumentality, the different applications of grace in all the various states which go to make up the Christian life."* "Mary," says Bourdaloue, "is the coadjutrix of God in the order of our salvation; and, as salvation began by her and by her consent to the word of God, it is by her and through her co-operation that it must be consummated."† "This consequence,

* Sermons on the Conception and the Nativity of our Lord.

† Sermon on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

it is true, was not deduced," as the Abbé Faillon observes, "by the early Fathers generally, though some of them perceived it, but it is the property of Christian truths to receive their development successively, according to the wants of the Church in different ages and the designs of Providence; and God seems to have reserved the exposition of this doctrine principally for the age of theologians and doctors, who wrote with greater precision and with more of method than did the Fathers. In fact," he continues, "St. John Damascene, who gave a new form to theology and whose decisions are received by the Greeks with the same respect as those of St. Thomas by the Latins, St. Thomas himself, Albert the Great, who was his master, St. Bonaventure, St. Anselm, Peter de Blois, St. Antonine, Gerson, St. Bernardine of Siena, and a vast number of other doctors teach simply and positively, as a matter on which all are agreed, that Mary is the channel of all graces."* But the great promulgators of the doctrine in these latter times were the men whom God raised up to be the reformers of the clergy. Cardinal de Bérulle and P. de Condren revived it in the Oratory, and thence M. Olier, P. Eudes, and many others received it, to disseminate it in their turn. "If the wisdom of God," wrote M. Olier, "was not pleased in the beginning to make known, by the holy Fathers, to the whole body of the faithful the transcendent communications which Jesus makes to His Virgin Mother, and the intimate union which He has with her,—for which she is called throughout the Church *Electa ut sol* (Elect as the sun),—it is but meet that we should apply ourselves to the holy verities

* M. Faillon gives in a note the very words of the several Saints and Doctors mentioned above. They may be found also, together with other testimonies, at the end of Père de Gallifet's *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* (Burns & Oates, 1880). See also, as to Mary's ever-energizing power and influence in every age of the Church, F. Faber's *Blessed Sacrament*, B. II, S. iv., where he speaks of M. Olier and his school being prominent in teaching, like St. Bernard, that "our Lord never seems to act in any notable way in the Church without our tracing the instrumental hand and power of Mary. When He went, He left her to be to the Church what she had been to Him, and, in fact, always works in the Church by her and never without her. This last truth," he says, "is wonderfully brought out in M. Olier's *Letters*, and was a principal characteristic of his beautiful spirit. In dogma, it has passed almost into a proverb that the doctrine about Mary shields the doctrine about Jesus, and contains it as she once contained Him. (See Card. Newman's *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, xvii. xviii.) In ritual they are never separated. In devotion they have grown together; and in great ecclesiastical epochs her action has been manifested to the Church in countless ways, both natural and miraculous."

which Providence vouchsafes to manifest in the progress of time. The Seminary of St. Sulpice, entering into the design of God, devotes and dedicates itself to preserve with honour this glorious treasure, and to exhibit in the sanctity of its manners this hidden life. The end it proposes to itself is to derive from this exhaustless fount of divine life whatever gifts, graces, and virtues it is able to acquire; and this also it is which ought strongly to move all ecclesiastics to nourish themselves with the interior life of Jesus in Mary, in order to correspond with the intentions of our Blessed Lord, who, in disclosing to us anything of His riches, does so only to make us sharers of them."

All from Jesus through Mary; all, therefore, to Jesus through Mary: this may be said to be the formulary which represents the distinctive idea or fundamental principle of the Seminary of St. Sulpice; and in nothing is it more conspicuously displayed than in the devotions which M. Olier originated or to which he was instinctively attracted. This made him select St. John the Evangelist as one of its special patrons; for on whom could his choice have more appropriately fallen than on him who lay on Jesus's breast, and into whose heart Jesus when dying instilled the filial love which He bore His holy Mother? "The love of Jesus and of Mary," said P. de Condren, "was so holy a love that it was meet that something of it should remain in the Church; and, in order to preserve it, St. John was put in the place of Christ, when He said to His blessed Mother, '*Behold thy son:*' * *thy* son, not another son. Mary thus received him as her own son, and this son survived her. St. John, on his part, forgetting self to take the place of Jesus, continued to render to Mary the same duties, and to serve her with the same filial love, which Jesus showed her. Fain would I renew in souls this grace, this first odour of heaven, this singular benediction, which was given at the beginning; but, as I am not worthy of the office, I beg our Lord to pour down His Spirit abundantly on others, who may accomplish so blessed a work." M. Olier was one of those in whom it may be truly said this prayer was fulfilled. "As the most holy Virgin," says the man of God, in his panegyric of St. John, "though filled with the plenitude of the sacerdotal spirit, had not the sacerdotal character, and therefore could not exercise in her own person the functions of the priesthood, the Saviour gave her St. John on Calvary, not only

* St. John xix. 26.

that he might be a son to her in His place, but that, by the Holy Mysteries which he celebrated for her and for her intentions, he might supply her with the means of satisfying the ardent desires of her heart for the establishment of the Church; as also console her for the absence of her Son by the happiness she enjoyed of feeding on Him daily. This is why God does not leave the holy Virgin St. Joseph for her guardian, or any secular person, who had not been ordained priest of the new law; he does not even leave her any woman for her guardian, as might have seemed more fitting in the eyes of the world; but he leaves her one who is both virgin and priest, a man who is pure as an angel, and superior to the angels by his office of sacrificer of Jesus Christ, an office with which he was invested that he might offer upon the altar the continuation of the Sacrifice of the Cross for the intentions of the most holy Virgin."

This pious practice of offering Masses for the intentions of the Blessed Mother of God was one much observed by the French Oratory, and was particularly dear to Cardinal de Bérulle and P. de Condren, both of whom were favoured with extraordinary lights from Heaven. M. Olier had made a vow to say Mass every Saturday for her intentions, and this vow he faithfully performed; but, on founding the Seminary, he directed that three Masses should be offered every day the whole fruit of which he desired to be put into the hands of Mary: considered, in the first, as queen of the Church triumphant; in the second, as queen and advocate of the Church militant; in the third, as queen and consoler of the Church suffering; and in a book wherein he marked down the several intentions with which Mass might be said, he recommended his priests to offer the Holy Sacrifice on Saturdays for the intentions of the Blessed Virgin.*

So devout a client of Mary could never, we may be sure, separate from this Queen of Virgins the chaste spouse whom Heaven had given her. Another patron of the Seminary, therefore, was St. Joseph, whose extraordinary vocation has so close an affinity to that of priests. He would have his clergy also cultivate a particular devotion to the holy Apostles, as being, after Jesus Christ, the

* The doctrine here inculcated, with the devotional practices founded thereon, is, as need scarcely be said, essentially identical with that which forms the primary idea of the wonderful book on *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* by the Venerable Grignon de Montfort which Father Faber translated with his own hand.

foundations of the Church; and it has therefore always been the custom at St. Sulpice to celebrate High Mass upon their festivals. It was his wish, moreover, that there should ever be twelve individuals in the Seminary who should charge themselves with the duty of rendering special honour to the twelve Apostles; venerating in them the abundance of their Apostolic grace, blessing God for having chosen them to be the preachers of His Gospel to the world, and, above all, imploring of Him a participation of their spirit for the universal Church and, in particular, for all the ecclesiastics of the house. From a like motive of piety he called the twelve principal apartments in the Seminary by their names.

Nor were these the only members of the heavenly court whose patronage M. Olier sought. Seeing the prediction of the Venerable Mère Agnès fulfilled before his eyes, he was moved to put in execution a desire he had long entertained of associating himself with the great Order of St. Dominic. To this end he was admitted a member of the Third Order towards the close of the year 1651, with several other priests of his community, in the chapel of the Seminary. There is good reason for believing that he was affiliated also to the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, as well as to that of St. Francis of Paula; at least both are equally ambitious of claiming him for a brother. His devotion to St. Martin of Tours has already been mentioned, and in the December of 1653 he obtained from the Chapter of the church a formal association for himself and his successors, and for all the ecclesiastics of the Seminary, in their prayers, Masses, and good works. And even yet his pious greed was not satisfied. To honour the great Apostle of France, St. Denis, and to inspire his company with a continual veneration for this holy bishop, he effected a similar association with the Abbey of Montmartre, from which he also obtained a relic of the Saint; and, ever mindful of the dream which had determined his vocation to the ecclesiastical state, he added to his list of patrons the two illustrious doctors of the Church, St. Ambrose and St. Gregory the Great, and celebrated their festivals every year with special devotion, a custom which has been perpetuated to the present day.

But the principal feast of the Seminary was that of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, whose dedication of herself in the Temple, in unconscious preparation for the incommunicable dignity of Mother of God incarnate, M. Olier loved to regard as offering the most perfect model to those who, in embracing the clerical state,

separate themselves from the world in order to fit themselves for the celebration of the august Mysteries of the Altar. On that day every ecclesiastic in the house was to make a solemn renewal of his engagements, uniting himself in spirit to the interior dispositions of the daughter of the King of kings when she left her people and her father's house. "Filled with the Spirit of God," he wrote, "which is all might, all ardour, all love, alone, at the age of three years, she ascends the steps of the Temple, teaching us thereby that God supplies for our infirmities, and she comes to ratify solemnly on this day that which she had done in the first moment of her life. She enters with a forgetfulness of the world, a death to herself, an abandonment to God, a love and a zeal, which surpasses all conception. She looks not behind her; in quitting this gross, corrupt world she thinks not whether she will need anything in the service of God, whether this great God will suffice her for everything or not. She thinks not of her home or of her parents; she surrenders herself wholly to God, with a marvellous confidence, never reverting to herself or to any created thing; and thus she teaches us to live in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ utterly abandoned to the care of His Father."

The first occasion of this observance was on November 21st, 1650, about which time, as we have seen, the new chapel was consecrated. A few days previous to the festival, M. Olier, with that tender child-like piety which he ever entertained for the Virgin Mother, went to Notre Dame to invite her to be present; the eve was kept as a strict fast, a practice never discontinued, and the Papal Nuncio himself presided at the ceremony. At the feet of this representative of the Vicar of Jesus Christ M. Olier and all the ecclesiastics of the Seminary renewed once again the profession they had made on receiving the tonsure, and consecrated themselves anew, after the example of Mary, to the service of God, the only lot and portion of clerics. It happened that the General Assembly of the Clergy was being held in Paris at the time, and the Bishops deputed one of their number to express, in the name of their united body, the joy and satisfaction with which they had beheld the happy fruits which the Seminary had produced during the eight years of its existence, and the confident hopes they entertained of the good it would hereafter effect for the Church; at the same time bestowing their benediction. An extraordinary fervour was enkindled in the hearts of the whole Community, and all felt that the act in which they had been engaged would prove a fresh source of graces to the Seminary. M. Olier himself, filled with gratitude for the favours which his

Benefactress had obtained, besought her to indicate to him in what way he could best evince his love and homage, and received this answer: "Prepare me hearts;" by which, he says, she meant him to understand that what was most pleasing to the Mother was to have hearts to serve her dear Son in the ministry of His Church.

But he soon received a substantial proof of her watchful care and powerful aid. The letters patent accorded by the Crown in 1645 had never been registered by the Parliament, and so many obstacles had been thrown in the way that M. Olier had ceased his applications, without any intention of renewing them. But two days after the ceremony just described, he felt an inward conviction, when engaged in prayer, that his petition would be granted. He, therefore, sought an interview with M. Molé, the First President, on whom the matter chiefly depended. At first the magistrate made many difficulties, but, on M. Olier giving utterance to a few words which had been suggested to him in prayer, the heart of him whom he was addressing seemed (as he expresses it) suddenly to expand, and, throwing his arms around the man of God, he said, "Yes, I will do it; and I thank you for giving me an occasion of terminating my official course by rendering God this service." The Parliament accordingly registered the royal letters, and the Seminary of St. Sulpice became henceforth a legalised corporation, capable of holding and inheriting property, and enjoying all the privileges and immunities which the State could bestow.

Having thus obtained a success which had hitherto appeared hopeless, M. Olier was encouraged to approach another matter which closely concerned the interests of the institute. It was the custom for all Communities to select some person of influence as their civil protector; but M. Olier, doubting whether it would be pleasing to his heavenly Patroness that he should have any earthly helper, went to Notre Dame to learn her will; when she, he says, "who loves order and would have all things done in order," gave him to understand that he should enjoy her protection by taking as his patron this same President Molé, who was a relative of his, and whom he had already in intention chosen for the office. This great man received the proposal with the utmost cordiality, responding feelingly to the pious terms in which it was conveyed, and, as experience proved, in all respects fulfilled the assurance which had been given, that in him the Seminary should find the protector it sought.

When M. Olier first went to Vaugirard in 1642, he knew nothing as to his being destined, in the counsels of God, to found the

Seminary and reform the notorious parish of St. Sulpice. To prepare him for these stupendous works and to assist him in their accomplishment, Divine Providence had made choice of three persons of whom frequent mention has been made in this history: Dom Grégoire Tarrisse, General of the Benedictines of St. Maur; Dom Hugues Bataille, Procurator of the same Congregation; and the saintly widow, Marie Rousseau. But, as if these zealous and holy persons had been brought together for this sole purpose, as soon as the two objects for which they laboured may be said to have been fulfilled, they were separated from each other and their united co-operation came to an end. P. Bataille was elected Prior of St. Martin des Champs at Paris on March 17th, 1645; in the following year he left the Benedictine Community, and, returning to the Cistercian Order (as already intimated), became Prior of Coincy. From that time forward his connection with the Seminary ceased, except that after the death of M. Olier he delivered into the hands of his successor at St. Sulpice all the writings which the servant of God had composed by his direction and of which he had hitherto had the keeping. P. Tarrisse continued to aid M. Olier with his counsels for two years longer, when he died at the Abbey of St. Germain, on September 24th, 1648, a year before the foundations of the Seminary were begun. Marie Rousseau, to whose unceasing prayers M. Olier's conversion, under God, was due, retired when the building had commenced—as though her mission were ended and all her aspirations satisfied—to the Maison d'Instruction, which (as previously mentioned) she had herself established, and which she ruled with consummate ability and prudence. She died on August 4th, 1680, and was buried in one of the vaults of the church of St. Sulpice, directly under the Lady Chapel. "This testimony," writes M. du Ferrier,—who, it will be remembered, had once entertained a strong prejudice against her,—"I can render to her virtue: although her life was altogether extraordinary it was entirely free from singularity. I beheld in her a great humility and an undeviating fidelity to her rule of life, never having observed in her the least symptom of self-seeking. To the end she continued to be *full of good works.*" *

* Her successor was Marie-Françoise du Plessis le Picard. On the death of her husband, M. de Paris, she went to the chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette at Issy, and there, despoiling herself of all her worldly ornaments, dedicated herself unreservedly to Mary. From that moment she wore nothing but the coarsest garments under her ordinary dress, and led a life of the greatest austerity.

CHAPTER III.

M. OLIER'S METHOD OF SPIRITUAL TRAINING.

THE servant of God had constructed his material building according to the pattern which had been shown him by the Blessed Virgin. But there was a spiritual edifice to be raised, the model of which had also been divinely given, and we are now to see by what process this work was accomplished; in other words, how the holy founder of St. Sulpice formed the ecclesiastics of his seminary to the virtues and perfection of the sacerdotal state. The effects produced by the system he inaugurated were in a short time so remarkable that, when M. Godeau, Bishop of Vence, visited the Seminary and some of the clergy who were with him, admiring the beauty and solidity of the structure, exclaimed, in the words of the disciples to our Lord, "*Aspice quales lapides!*—(Behold what manner of stones!)" * that prelate replied, "Say rather, *Aspice quales homines!*—(Behold what manner of men!)."

That M. Olier had a very exalted idea of the sacerdotal office, and of the perfection to which priests are called, it were superfluous to state. "They are set in the Church," he would say, "to be models of sanctity to all conditions of men; consequently they ought to possess the graces and the virtues of all other states; religious as well as seculars ought to see in them all that is necessary to their own perfection. If priests who are detached from the world are said to live like religious, it is only a sign of the corruption of the age; for it ought rather to be said, in the language of the saints, that religious lead the life of priests, seeing that priests are bound to live in such wise, and religious are bound to imitate the holiness of priests, to follow in their footsteps and sanctify themselves by practising those rules of perfection which

* St. Mark xiii. 1.

were originally given for the clergy.* Accordingly, he would have the course of probation to which a priest is subjected as strict of its kind as the noviciate in a religious house. When any applied for admission he would confer with them in person, and examine them as to their dispositions and the motives which led them to embrace the ecclesiastical state, especially whether they had any view to obtaining benefices or retaining such as they already possessed; and he would sometimes subject candidates to a prolonged suspense before receiving them as inmates of the house. Thus, he delayed for five or six months the reception of M. Charles-Louis de Lantages, afterwards so distinguished as a Catechist, because he had long been in the enjoyment of a benefice and he feared that he might be influenced by some motive of ambition or self-interest. But, having satisfied himself, after strict probation, as to his detachment from all mundane views, and seeing the rapid progress which he made in the practice of those priestly virtues of which he was to become so splendid an example, he admitted him into the Seminary on January 17th, 1643.†

M. Olier's first object was to inspire his ecclesiastics with a desire of Christian perfection. A cleric, he said, is one who, if not already in the state of perfection, at least aspires to it, and to this end he must deny himself and die to the world. "The seminary is the hedge which separates the vineyard of the Lord from the world. This hedge is full of thorns, and the world ought not to approach it without feeling the prick of them; that is, without being made sensible of the horror we have of its execrable maxims. This house ought to be so replenished with evangelical virtues as to inspire distaste, aversion, and hatred for all the contrary vices. We ought to strip ourselves of the world's livery and of its whole exterior, and exhibit nothing in our bearing which can serve to attract its esteem." Anything, therefore, in his ecclesiastics which he deemed wanting in simplicity or modesty he instantly remarked upon and strove to correct. Thus, observing

* On the subject of sacerdotal perfection the reader is referred to F. Faber's *Growth in Holiness*, Chap ix., to the Bishop of Salford's *Introduction* to the *Life of St. John Baptist de Rossi*; and Cardinal Manning's *Preface* to the *Life of St. Charles Borromeo.*

† M. de Lantages was the first Superior of the Seminary of Notre Dame du Puy, and the author of the Life of the Ven. Mère Agnès de Jésus which the Abbé Lucot has recently revised and enlarged. He has himself also been made the subject of a very edifying biography.

hat M. de Lantages had a way of walking which seemed to him to savour of the artificial manners of the world, he often begged him with the utmost sweetness to carry himself differently. But the habit had become so natural to him that, in spite of all his endeavours to correct himself, he was continually, from inadvertence, relapsing into it. One day M. Olier, being in his confessional, saw the young man pass by carrying himself as usual, upon which he stepped behind him and, taking him by the shoulders, said, "Ah! why do you still walk in that way?" The rebuke proved effectual; M. de Lantages never offended in the same way again. So, too, though he laid much stress on their observing towards each other, and towards every one, all the kindly attentions which are inseparable from true charity, he could not endure in them—to quote his own words—"affected civilities, compliments, witticisms, and other little modish elegancies, such as studied postures and graceful bowing, the object of which is simply to please the world, and to be thought courteous, polished, and well-bred. That which ought to render us welcome in all companies," he adds, "is our being dead to the world; for, if we are valued for anything else, we can produce no fruit. We shall but inspire an attachment to ourselves, and a certain secret esteem, which, in fact, is what we are seeking, although perhaps not by any deliberate act of the will. If you are told that you ought to seek the world's esteem and must fain have it, regard it as a pernicious maxim, worthy only of execration. It cannot be gained without our having in ourselves something of the world: '*Si de mundo essetis, mundus quod suum erat diligeret.*'* God may, if He please, cause us to be generally esteemed, but it is a gift which He bestows on those who do not wish for it, who avoid and despise it, and who have been the first to treat the world with scorn."

To preserve among the young ecclesiastics a spirit of holy equality, and prevent all assumption of superiority, he directed that in the general exercises of the Seminary there should be no distinction of places; and, observing one of them disposed to take precedence on account of his better birth and position in the world, he reproved him publicly in these terms: "If you love Jesus Christ, you will rejoice to be always near Him or with Him. I would advise you, therefore, to take *this* place" (pointing to the lowest),

* "If you had been of the world, the world would love its own." St. John xv. 19.

"for it is the one He loves best, and has chosen for Himself, and where you will be certain to find Him." However, as no community could subsist without distinctions and gradations, to prevent any evil thence arising, he would say to those who occupied any honourable position, "First places in this house are to be taken as humiliations, for they are such as are affected by the children of the world. The desire of precedence belongs to the flesh and the devil; when, then, we have to put ourselves before others, we ought to be ashamed of seeing ourselves in the place which the devil seeks and Jesus Christ shuns."

Anything that betokened a passion for news or a love of sight-seeing was his particular aversion. Not that he laid any express prohibitions on the seminarists, for he preferred that they should mortify themselves simply from a motive of advantage to their souls; and in this, as in all things, he was careful to avoid excess. Being on a journey, accompanied by some of his ecclesiastics, he had occasion, more than once—as indeed we have seen—to rebuke them for stopping to gaze at the mansions and noble buildings which were visible from the road. But on arriving at Bourges he took them to the cathedral, which is a magnificent specimen of Gothic architecture, and, observing that they scarcely ventured to raise their eyes and admire what was before them, he said, "The beauty of churches is not like that of the things of this world. You may look at churches, and at whatever is consecrated to the worship of God, provided you do it in a religious spirit, and not out of curiosity. *I have loved the beauty of Thy house*, says the Psalmist, *and the place where Thy glory dwelleth;** and if subjects rejoice to see their princes in magnificent palaces, what ought to be the delight of Christians at beholding the beauty of the places consecrated to the service of their Master, the King of kings and the Lord of the universe! These vast piles of stone, the music of the bells resounding far and wide, these splendid functions and august ceremonies and rich decorations, proclaim, as clearly as is possible here below, the greatness and the majesty of the God whom we there serve and adore."

As for himself, so perfect was his mortification of his senses that they seemed to have abdicated their office. A servant of the house being found fault with one day by one of the Community for taking the Superior a basin of soup that was quite cold, the man

* Psalm xxv. 8.

replied, "What does it signify whether it is cold or hot? He does not taste what he eats, and takes no notice of what is set before him." Another time, when he was being vested for High Mass, the subdeacon, in putting on the maniple, ran the pin, without knowing it, into his arm. Finding there was some resistance, he said to M. Olier that he could not get it in any further; on which the man of God, without removing his arm, replied, in his usual gentle way, "It will go no further because it has pierced to the bone." So great was his abstraction, when engaged in any act of devotion, that the most sudden surprises were unheeded. One Holy Saturday, while performing the benediction of the fonts, the burning wax of the Paschal candle kept falling on his hand, and when one of the assistants at last perceived what was taking place, and snatched the candle from him, he did it with such violence that it almost took the skin off; yet all this time the servant of God betrayed no consciousness of pain. It need scarcely be said that a man so mortified would strongly recommend to others the practice of corporal penance, and the use of the discipline was consequently as frequent at St. Sulpice as in many religious houses. An ecclesiastic observing to him one day that, instead of this sort of penance, he preferred offering the Holy Sacrifice, which had a wholly different value in the sight of God, M. Olier replied, "Strange that we are so lavish of the Blood of Christ and so sparing of our own! If it is true that the Son of God supplies for us, yet ought we not to begin by offering to the Eternal Father something of our own before we have recourse to this divine compensation for our poverty and misery?" But in expressing himself thus he was far from approving any indiscreet and excessive fervour; on the contrary, he strongly censured those who acted merely in obedience to their own impulses, being used to say that austerities become cruelties when they are no longer prompted by the Spirit of God. Thus he administered a severe rebuke to M. de Poussé one day because, not content with inflicting large and deep wounds upon himself in taking the discipline, he had the imprudence to conceal what he had done, in order to suffer the more; so that at last, the sores having festered, painful incisions had to be made to arrest the evil. It was one of his maxims that the ill-regulated attempts at mortification which are made in youth, without the advice of a director, often injure the constitution for life; and, besides, such imprudent austerities are commonly of short duration, as experience proved.

But, while earnestly enjoining "bodily exercise," he did not fail to warn his disciples that, when it has not the mortification of the interior as its base and principle, it "is profitable for little;" * nay, it produces in the secret of the heart a certain complacency and self-esteem; it gives the soul a kind of stay grounded on its own works, which nourishes pride instead of destroying it. He would, therefore, have them apply themselves to the destruction of their vices less by maceration of the body than by the Spirit of our Lord and the practice of Christian virtues. This, indeed, was the kind of mortification which they were specially called to practise. Their vocation was different from that of St. Bernard. In the monastery of that holy Abbot our Lord desired that the flesh should be subdued and brought into subjection by exterior efforts, but in the Seminary He required that the flesh should be subdued by the spirit. St. Bernard was called to retire absolutely from the world, but, in regard to themselves, it was clear that the Spirit of our Lord was to separate them from the world while living in its midst. Interior mortification, he said, has none of the disadvantages of bodily mortification. In the first place, it is capable of being more constantly practised, for the body cannot be made to suffer unintermittingly, whereas the interior can be mortified continually. In the second place, it is more comprehensive in its character and effects. He who wears a hair-shirt punishes his sense of feeling, leaving his other senses unchastised, and it is the same with fasting; but interior mortification extends the infliction to the whole self. In crucifying the heart we crucify that which is the universal source of all our appetites and inclinations. When fire is set to the root of a tree, its branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits perish likewise: thus he who labours to mortify his mind and heart mortifies at the same time all the old man. From the first, therefore, it was his endeavour to lead the seminarists to mortify their own judgment and their own will; and before admitting them to the tonsure he spent an entire year in inculcating the necessity of killing self in their hearts. To this end he insisted especially on the duty of being perfectly open and sincere with their director, following his counsels without reserve, and obeying the rules of the institute with most minute exactness. "No one on earth," he said, "is dispensed from submission, however exalted the lights with which God has favoured him; they ought always to be approved by him who holds here

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

below the place of God. Such was our Lord's own fidelity to this rule that in His infancy He was subject to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.* With this example before him who would wish to guide himself?"

The injunction which he laid on others the man of God invariably obeyed himself. Extraordinary as were the graces which he received throughout his life he never took them for his rule of conduct, but submitted in all things to the judgment of his directors. "It is an intolerable fault," he said, "to depart, however slightly, from the ordinary rule and maxims of obedience, which are far more assured than any private revelations. In bestowing His gifts upon us, God desires to make us perfect, and not to render us more obstinately attached to our own opinions. After all, we are not bound to follow private revelations, but we *are* bound to obey those whom God has set over us. For our greater perfection He may give us some extraordinary light, in order to try our fidelity in sacrificing it to the duty of obedience. In the name of God," he wrote on one occasion, "deem every inspiration false which is opposed to the orders of a superior. The Spirit of God is not contrary to Itself; and should a superior order that which is not in accordance with His good pleasure, so long as He does not let you know this, you would do what was most agreeable to Him in obeying."

Thus obedience was one of the virtues on which he laid the greatest stress. "Obedience," he was wont to say, "is the life of the children of the Church, the compendium of all virtues, the assured way to Heaven, an unfailing means for ascertaining the will of God, a fortress into which the devil has no access, one of the severest, but at the same time one of the sweetest, of martyrdoms, seeing that it makes us perfectly conformable to Jesus Christ. He who faithfully obeys the rule is invulnerable; whereas he who lets himself follow his own caprices lays himself open to the assaults of the enemy, and runs great risk of falling." Accordingly, no inmate of the house was to step outside the door, or pay or receive visits, without leave obtained of the Superior; and the observance of silence was so strictly enforced that M. de Bretonvilliers could say that, except in time of recreation, not a word was spoken, although the Community consisted of more than a hundred persons. Fidelity to a rule formed the subject of the last capital lesson which M. Olier gave the young ecclesiastics on their quitting the Seminary to enter

* St. Luke ii. 51.

on their duties in the world. "If you observe a good rule of life, faithfully and out of love for the Lord," he would say to them, "you have everything to hope; you will live for God. But if you have no rule, or if you are not faithful in observing it, simply from motives of faith, as far as circumstances permit, you have everything to fear for your salvation; you are not living for God."

Of all the Christian virtues humility is the most efficacious in putting to death the old man within us. The servant of God, therefore, in honour of the adorable humiliations of our Lord, would have all perform in turn the menial offices of the house,—sweep the floors, wash the dishes, wait at table, dole out bread to the poor,—in all which he might have proposed himself for an example, and have said with St. Paul, "*Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.*"* For ever since he had taken his vow of servitude, in whatever company he might be he seated himself, in spirit, at the feet of others. Nay, M. de Bretonvilliers records, in so many words, that he has seen him cleaning the shoes of his brethren, bare-headed and on his knees, kissing their feet, and performing other services of a like kind, with a tenderness and a fervour which it was most touching to witness; and M. de Lantages relates how, on his returning one day from Vaugirard in very dirty plight, M. Olier took a towel, and, kneeling down, wiped his feet and then kissed them, and this with so much simplicity and charity that the act seemed to have nothing of singularity in it.

He particularly disliked hearing any speak disparagingly of themselves, knowing how often a secret self-esteem takes the disguise of professed contempt. "Self-humiliation," he would say, "to be genuine, must spring from a sincere desire of losing the good opinion of others." Some one observing in his presence, and before several other persons, that he was a miserable sinner, M. Olier said, "When a man wishes really to humble himself, he is not satisfied with accusing himself in general terms, but mentions some particular fault of which he is habitually guilty. To call oneself a miserable grievous sinner is quite compatible with a desire of praise, and may very well conceal a subtle pride." Another time, on some one eagerly recounting a good action he had done, M. Olier, after listening awhile, rose from his chair, and said to him, with great sweetness, "My dear Sir, let us forget ourselves, never let us talk of self, do not let us fill with it minds and hearts which have been created for God." For himself,

* 1 Cor. xi. 1.

he would never endure to have a word uttered to his advantage; he instantly said something which might raise the mind to God, or changed the conversation; to be praised was positive torture to him. Neither would he allow any marks of distinction to be shown him which he deemed inconsistent with the vow which he had made to be the servant of all. One day, hearing some person call him simply *Monsieur*, as usual in designating the master of a house, he said, in a loud tone, "There is no master here except Jesus Christ; I am but a servant, and an unprofitable servant."

But this habit of mortification and obedience was not its own end; it was wholly in order to the forming in themselves the life of Jesus Christ. This divine life, as he was ever insisting, is to be derived from the Blessed Sacrament; that adorable mystery being the perennial spring whence it is shed abroad in souls. "All must believe with a firm faith," he said, "that the design of Jesus Christ living in the Eucharist is to impart to us His life and virtues; as, for example, piety towards God, charity towards our neighbour, annihilation of self, unceasing hostility to the world and to sin. Every one must be firmly assured that he cannot receive these virtues more abundantly than in the communication which Jesus Christ makes of them in the Most Holy Sacrament; and he will have recourse to that divine banquet in order to advance in the divine life."

Next to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar the means he prescribed for receiving this divine life were prayer and meditation. "Prayer," he said, "is the supplement of the Most Holy Eucharist, our Lord having given both the one and the other in order to unite us to Himself. In prayer we receive the same benefits as in Communion, though not in equal proportion; in prayer, as in the Eucharist, we adore Jesus Christ present in such manner that there needs, as it were, only the removal of a veil to disclose Him to us; in prayer Jesus Christ nourishes the soul and fortifies it; He unites Himself closely to it; He abides in it, and it in Him; He makes it like unto Himself, inspires it with a disgust for the gross things of earth, fills it with love for those of heaven, and makes it terrible to the evil one." It was his desire that the seminarists should faithfully adhere to the method of prayer followed in the house;* not that he would lay restrictions upon those who felt themselves attracted to any different mode, provided only they obtained the approval of

* See end of this Chapter.

their director, but he judged it to be of the last importance that in a community there should be one fixed principle and rule from which none should be allowed to deviate except for solid reasons; and he expressly prohibited those who were moved to follow another path, however excellent in itself, from making it matter of conversation with others, lest it should have the effect of inspiring distaste for the accustomed method. Neither would he dispense any from the obligation of preparing beforehand the subject of meditation, for fear of illusion; but, when once they had faithfully complied with this direction, he would not have them do violence to themselves by pursuing the subject further, but bade them yield themselves in all simplicity to the attractions of God's Holy Spirit.

Another means which he especially recommended to his disciples was the assiduous study of the actions of their Divine Master as recorded in the Gospels, and of the interior dispositions with which He accompanied them. "Our Lord" (he said) "would have us take Him as our master, on the part of the Eternal Father, who taught Him from all eternity what He was to teach us: '*Ipsum audite.*'* By His mouth He speaks to us now. '*All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father*,' said the Son of God, '*I have made known to you.*'† It is our Lord's desire that in reading every day a chapter of the New Testament we should learn some maxim from His mouth, and live, in the depth of our soul, according to that which we shall thus have been taught. It is this spiritual life, this hidden life, this interior disposition of the heart, which, above all, He desires in us. Jesus Christ alone must live and reign within us, there to serve and glorify His Father. May it please Him, in His mercy and goodness, to establish His life in our souls." To this end, therefore, he directed the seminarists to read a chapter of the Gospel on their knees, with head uncovered, and therein listen to our Lord's divine teaching; then to consider some one of His acts or virtues; and, lastly, to examine themselves, and see what their own dispositions were in performing the same act or practising the same virtue. This exercise he called the *particular examen*, and, to facilitate its practice, a book was composed for the use of the Seminary by M. de Poussé and M. Tronson, the groundwork of which was furnished by M. Olier.

Indeed, the study of the Scriptures he declared to be one of God's

* "Hear ye Him." St. Matthew xvii. 5; St. Mark ix. 6.
† St. John xv. 15.

express commands to the house, and he directed the ecclesiastics of the Seminary to treat the Bible, even exteriorly, with all respect and reverence, by giving it the most honourable place in their chamber. "Holy Scripture," he said, "interiorly nourishes the soul; it is a ciborium in which God has been pleased to hide Himself, in order to give Himself to us and communicate His graces. And, in fact, according to St. Paulinus, there were anciently in the holy tabernacle two compartments, side by side, in one of which was the Blessed Sacrament and in the other the Divine Scriptures. One contained the Word of God, under the sacred species, in the majestic silence of His Divinity; the other, the Word of God expounding Himself exteriorly and rendering audible that which He says in Himself,—expounding Himself after our mode and fashion of expressing ourselves. For the Word of God, that is, what God says in Himself, is incomprehensible, God saying for ever and ever all that He is and all that He knows; and this is immense, infinite! But in the Scriptures we read only a single syllable of what that fathomless Bosom pronounces within Itself; we see the thoughts of God only in a very imperfect manner. While listening to this infinite word, the unfolding of the eternal secret of God, we must keep our mind respectfully attentive to the revealed words, and to that portion of the Divine knowledge which He manifests in His Scriptures, regarding them as the oracle whence God speaks to us, as the ark and the tabernacle wherein He is pleased to be consulted and adored."

Of this devout respect for the Word of God M. Olier was himself a perfect model. He always read the Scriptures on his knees and with head uncovered; his Bible occupied a sort of throne, which he had erected for it in his chamber; and, on entering or leaving it, he humbly adored the Divine Spirit residing in the Sacred Book. From a motive of religion he had its covers adorned with a magnificent design in silver, representing the Word of God worshipped by the Cherubim, on the one side, under the emblem of an open volume; and on the other, under the Eucharistic veils, with this inscription, which aptly expresses the devotion of the Seminary to the Divine Word considered in these two states: "*Par cultus et amor utrique.*" * This Bible is still preserved in the Seminary of St. Sulpice.

* "Equal worship and love to both." It is needless to say that M. Olier did not mean that the Divine Word is personally present in the Sacred Book as He is in the Blessed Eucharist. His words are to be understood, as he uses them, analogically, and not in a literal and absolute sense.

The virtue of religion, as being immediately conversant with the service and worship of Almighty God, M. Olier regarded as peculiarly incumbent on ecclesiastics, and he desired that the ceremonies of the Church, which were instituted to this very end, should be observed with the most scrupulous exactness. Herein he had the assistance of men endowed with no common gifts. Besides M. de Bassancourt, of his own community, to whom reference has more than once been made, he enjoyed the active co-operation of the learned Benedictine, Père Bauldry, who volunteered his services to instruct the students in this important department of their duties. So perfect was the experimental knowledge they thus attained that the Seminary came to be regarded as a high authority in such matters; and even M. Bourdoise himself, towards the close of his life, when in doubt on any point, would apply for information to the clergy of St. Sulpice. But the servant of God, as scarcely need be said, did not content himself with familiarizing his ecclesiastics with mere external details; he would initiate them also into the interior spirit and hidden meanings of the ceremonial of the Church, that their acts might be at once intelligent and devout, as well as faithful to the letter. "God the Father," he said, "takes no pleasure in any earthly thing unless He beholds in it something of His Son. Every act of the Jews was a figure of Jesus Christ: '*Omnia in figura contingebant illis.*'* Why should we be less religious towards Him? Even in their most ordinary actions, as, for instance, the eating of the manna, they were to behold our Lord, and to worship Him by faith; much more, then, ought we, who have had the advantage of receiving His Holy Spirit in order that all we do might be filled therewith, to consider Him in our most common acts, and interiorly adore Him in everything that can represent Him to us." Occupied with this thought, he composed his *Explanation of the Ceremonies of High Mass*, in which, while inculcating the sublimest doctrine, he indicated, in a manner truly Patristic, some of the many allegorical and mystical senses of which the several actions of the sacred rite are susceptible, with a view of showing the wonderful harmony of the whole, and the importance of not omitting one single item, however insignificant it may appear.

Besides taking part in the ordinary exercises of the Seminary, the young clerics assisted in rotation at the different functions performed in the parish church; but, some of the Directors complaining that this frequent and prolonged attendance was a serious interruption to

* "All these things happened to them in figure." 1 Cor. x. 11.

other avocations, M. Olier, before making an alteration to which he was very averse, consulted M. Bourdoise on the subject, who, in that laconic manner which was peculiar to him, replied, "Monsieur, Monsieur, you must labour *in* the hierarchy, not alongside of it;" meaning that ecclesiastics destined to become parish priests ought to be trained to parochial duties. And such had ever been M. Olier's practice: as soon as a seminarist had been ordained priest he passed into the Community, and assisted the clergy in the administration of the sacraments; after a while he was permitted to officiate himself, attended by the Superior, who corrected any error he observed and supplied whatever instruction was required. He had another motive for the practice, and that was the edification of the people, considering that they might benefit by the devout and reverent demeanour of the seminarists as much as by their catechetical instructions.

The following incidents which are noted by the Abbé Faillon will serve to illustrate both the high conscientiousness of the master and the fidelity with which his scholars copied his example.

M. Jean de Sève, Seigneur of Mérobert and maternal uncle of M. Tronson, resigned his post of Président aux Enquêtes in the Parliament of Paris when he was nearly sixty years of age, and came to offer himself to M. Olier with a view to embracing the ecclesiastical state. The servant of God received him most cordially, but, judging it prudent to put his vocation to the strictest test, he made him take the part of an ordinary acolyth at the parish Mass on Sundays, an office which he performed in a spirit of childlike humility and obedience. When, however, time went on, and his probation seemed to be indefinitely prolonged, being desirous of receiving holy orders, he gave expression to his feelings in a letter to M. Olier. In his answer the man of God would teach him that in so momentous a matter he ought not to take counsel of the impulses of nature, but abandon himself to the guidance of those to whom God has given His Spirit to direct them. "When you were President," he wrote, "and, with closed doors, had to deal with grave and difficult questions in your court, you would not have endured that a valet or a lackey should take his seat beside you and offer his advice. So neither does the Holy Trinity permit a foolish, shameless gabbler to intrude into Its councils and disturb with his impertinences the peace and calm which preside in the conclave of grace. That foolish, senseless gabbler is nature; which must be thrust aside and abandoned at the

portals of our heart, and left to vent its clatter among the rabble. The ministers of God take no account of such disturbances, they listen only to the voice of Jesus, who speaks gently and sweetly in the soul which keeps silence. You know by experience what joy fills your heart when that great All presides and speaks within it. Your soul is then at rest, and nothing disquiets it. But when, on the contrary, nature, that rebellious slave and senseless libertine, speaks to you, it causes only restlessness, commotion, and discontent, it troubles the peace and tranquil calm which ought ever to attend you.

"My dear Sir, a wise servant awaits in silence the orders of his master, who sees what is passing in the house and does not make his intentions known till the moment it pleases him to do so. In like manner, our great Master sees the needs of His Church, and keeps a watchful eye on those whom He desires to promote in His service; and He must be left to do it in His own time. He gives us our rule of conduct in the Gospel, where He bids each of us take the lowest place in His house and at His table: '*Recumbe in novissimo loco;*'* adding that we must wait till we are invited to go up higher. No one, therefore, ought to be eager for advancement, or put himself forward; he must let himself be called, solicited, and urged, and that with importunity. As it is Jesus Christ who, penetrating to the depth of our hearts, discerns the purity, the sanctity, the strength, the prudence, the genuine zeal, the profound humility, and all the other evangelical virtues which are necessary to render us worthy of His charges, so it is He who imposes silence on His Church, and prevents those being called whom He does not see sufficiently well grounded to be promoted.

"Annihilate yourself before God, abide in patience, and await in peace the voice of your Master, who said to His disciples, '*In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras.*'† It will not be long before He speaks; but permit Him to speak, and let the humble sentiment of your heart, which sees itself so far removed from the perfect virtues of the Order to which you aspire, make you tremble for fear of being promoted without being as firmly established as your Divine Master desires you to be in everything which He requires of you. Labour on, therefore, with courage until the Ember week in September, when the whole Church, in penance and fasting, will implore the bestowal of all those virtues which are necessary for the ministers who present

* St. Luke xiv. 10.

† "In your patience you shall possess your souls." St. Luke xxi. 19.

themselves for the anointing. All the good and all the benediction of your future life depend on the holy dispositions with which you approach your ordination, and on your obedience to the law of the Divine Master. He never willingly accepts the services of one who enters His house by force, and who has not waited for His election and vocation with reverence, humility, and patience."

This letter was received in the spirit which dictated it. M. de Sève resigned himself implicitly to the guidance of his director, who in due time permitted him to receive holy orders. The event proved how salutary were the fruits which his long probation produced within him; no one evinced a greater reverence for the ecclesiastical state, or observed the canons of the Church more strictly. When, on his promotion to the Diaconate, he had to deliver himself of a thesis at the Sorbonne he would assume no other designation but that of his sacred order, renouncing all the titles which he had borne while living in the world; and so exact was he in his observance of the rubrics that he might have been proposed as a model of regularity. He was as strict with himself as he was obedient to rule, for he led a very austere and mortified life, but he still retained the ease and grace of manner for which he was distinguished as a layman, and even his severities were seasoned with so much geniality and good-humour as never, while correcting, to offend. It is related of him that, seeing a priest one day, who was vesting for Mass, spread the amice on his shoulders without first putting it over his head, as the rubrics direct, and, indeed, as the prayers * to be used while vesting distinctly imply, he said to him, "How is it, Sir, that you do not scruple to tell a lie at the very moment you are about to offer the Holy Sacrifice? You ask God to place the amice on your head, and you put it only on your shoulders."

M. Victor de Méliand, Bishop of Alet, when he was a student at St. Sulpice was in the habit of serving M. Olier's Mass, and one day, while making the usual preparations, he inadvertently laid his cap upon the altar; which the man of God observing reprimanded him severely for what he regarded as a profanation, seeing that the spotless Lamb of God was about to be immolated thereon, and by way of penance prohibited him from serving Mass for eight days.

* "Impone, Domine, capiti meo galeam salutis, ad expugnandos diabolicos incursus—(Place on my head, O Lord, the helmet of salvation, to repel the assaults of the devil)."

The young Prince de Conti, who had been destined for the ecclesiastical state,* being present one day at some public function in the church of St. Sulpice, asked the seminarist by whose side he found himself what was taught at the Seminary. Receiving no answer, the Prince supposed that he had not been heard, and repeated his question, but with the same result. Again, for the third time, he persisted, upon which the student made him this reply: "My lord, we are taught to keep silence in church." The Prince, to his credit, took the rebuke in good part, and thanked the young cleric for his counsel.

Some account has already been given of the numerous catechisings which M. Olier instituted, not only in the parish church but throughout the Faubourg, and of the incalculable good which was thus effected among the people. Catechising he considered to be a most important element in the training of ecclesiastics, as being peculiarly adapted to develope in them a zeal and love for souls. Accordingly, no less than seventy of them (as we learn from a writer of the last century) were employed in this manner. They prepared young persons for Confirmation and Communion; every Sunday and holiday they gave instructions to school-children of both sexes; in Lent they delivered familiar lectures to workmen and domestic servants; during Holy Week they provided a retreat for schoolboys; and every day throughout the year they were employed in giving conferences to the young clerics of the parish.

Convinced, moreover, that, if a school is to be a nursery of Christian youth, the teachers must labour at their calling in the spirit of Apostles, and not as mercenaries, he desired to see communities established which should be devoted to the work of instructing the poorer classes; and he encouraged his young ecclesiastics to form themselves into an association of prayer for obtaining a race of educators such as the needs of the Church demanded. This association was established in 1649, and was placed under the patronage of St. Joseph, Foster-Father of Jesus, that perfect model of instructors of youth. The impetus thus given to religious education by M. Olier had most important results in after years. The Venerable De la Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers (1680), entertained so profound a respect for this great man that he always spoke of him as his father. His first establishment was at Vaugirard,

* Mazarin, with a view to conciliating his brother, Louis Prince de Condé, had engaged to procure him a Cardinal's hat.

and his desire was to affiliate his community to that of St. Sulpice, for which purpose he removed it into the parish; but the two objects were found to be incompatible, and he was compelled to abandon his design. The Venerable Grignon de Montfort was himself a Sulpician, and his spirit still survives in the Sœurs de la Sagesse, a community which is among the most widely extended of any in France, especially in the West. M. Démia, again, who was in the habit of invoking M. Olier as a saint, on leaving the Seminary devoted himself to the religious instruction of the poor, especially at Lyons. He instituted a society of schoolmasters, and another of schoolmistresses, the latter of which is known as that of the Sœurs de St. Charles, its field of labour being principally in the South.

To return. Perfection may be said to have been the rule of the whole house, and under M. Olier's direction the Seminary is described as resembling a religious community in the glow of its first fervour. Each new comer, as he entered its walls, felt as if he had been brought into the society of the early Christians; the world was so totally renounced and excluded that even to speak of it except in terms of condemnation occasioned a remorse of conscience, and such was the love of poverty that the inmates seemed to vie with each other who should have what was worst and meanest, and perform the lowest and most distasteful offices. Everything was virtually in common, for what each possessed was equally at the service of his brethren. Gathered from all classes, and from all parts of the country, there were no differences or preferences among them; and so completely did each one hold himself at the disposal of his superior that at a word he would have hastened to the further end of the earth. Indeed, so ready were they to follow and almost to anticipate his will that he was obliged to be careful what he said, lest the hearer should on the instant act upon it to the detriment of his health. Such is the account given by one who, himself a Sulpician, was familiar with the traditions of the house. One thing they inherited from their founder in a singular degree—a tender, trustful love of Mary. Nothing was undertaken without consulting her; every one saluted her image as he entered or quitted his room, or that of his director. They loved to speak of her to one another, and would fast or perform some other act of mortification on her vigils; need it be added that they spoke also much and often of union with her Divine Son, and that the crucifix and the image of Mary were never divided? At M. Olier's suggestion each had one

or two monitors, whose business it was to apprize him of his faults. At the first stroke of the bell all the doors were thrown open, strict silence was observed, not a look even was exchanged in the corridors or on the stairs, and often, when two saluted as they passed, neither perceived who the other was. At recreation the stranger would have been at once struck with the brotherly affection, frankness, and mutual deference that marked the intercourse of the assembled students; the conversation, though it ran on pious subjects, was invariably cheerful and even lively, and the whole house was redolent of a certain sweet and pleasant air of kindliness and charity, which to one coming from the world without had a charm and an attraction such as it was impossible to resist. M. de Lantages, who, while M. Olier was testing his vocation, was a frequent visitor at St. Sulpice, thus describes his impressions at the time: "Though the distance from my lodging was considerable the fatigue was nothing to me; I seemed rather to fly than to walk, such was the pleasure I experienced in going to the house. I found there a perfection so far beyond anything we had yet attained, that I said to a friend who had accompanied me, 'Truly ours is a mere playing at being devout; it is only at the Seminary that real devotion is practised.'"

When the servant of God first undertook the charge of the parish, one of the objects he distinctly proposed to himself (as already mentioned) was the introduction of the highest Christian maxims into the schools of the Sorbonne by means of those students who should go through the necessary acts preparatory to taking their doctor's degree. The very end and design of the Seminary being to form good priests, he desired that piety should be given the pre-eminence over science, and that the studies pursued should be such as were calculated to produce holy and well-instructed pastors of souls rather than learned or brilliant divines. So in regard to the choice of a Superior he writes, "In the government of His family, God does not desire persons of learning and capacity who act simply by their learning and capacity, but He desires men who allow His Spirit to act, who are empty of themselves, who are not governed by human views and by rules drawn only from reason, nor by the counsels of men who are merely intelligent and learned, and are not fully perfected in Him alone."* Whether the students of St.

* *Vie de M. Emery*, par M. Gosselin, ancien Supérieur du Séminaire d'Issy. T. 1, p. 198. In the Introduction to his work the author gives brief but interesting notices of M. Olier's successors, of whom M. Emery was the ninth. They

Sulpice should prove to be learned divines as well as good pastors would depend, in his opinion, on their own natural abilities and on a concurrence of circumstances which it was impossible to foresee and needless to anticipate. At the same time he was far from lending any countenance to the erroneous idea that priests might be content with but a smattering of theological knowledge; on the contrary, he was accustomed to say that without knowledge a priest could never do much good in the Church. To inspire a love of study, he instituted a general theological course for the whole body of seminarists, and particular lectures for those who attended the schools of the Sorbonne. Every week also there was a public disputation between these two classes of students, and he desired that poor scholars who showed any special aptitude for theological science should receive every encouragement and assistance. The Church, he would say, is a body of which priests are the eyes; it is a ship, of which they are the pilots; a school, of which they are the masters; an army, of which they are the captains, and which they are commissioned to lead and protect in an unknown country and among enemies who lie in wait to surprise it. In the confessional they sit to render judgment, prompt and decisive, with none to aid or advise, on matters the most momentous on which any judge could be called upon to pronounce; in the pulpit they have to speak to both learned and ignorant, to maintain the truths of the Gospel, to combat vice, to resist the torrent of human opinion, to confound heresy, and expose its evasions, its impostures, and false issues; all which supposes a knowledge higher, deeper, and more extensive than can be acquired by private study, and such as has been exercised and proved in schools and academies. All, therefore, were to be well grounded in philosophy and scholastic theology, dogmatic and moral, as well as in controversy; but the great and primary object was to be the formation of priests,—interior men,—men of prayer, which he called the very life-spring of all virtues and the indispensable means of attaining sacerdotal perfection.

Study, he declared, ought to be but another mode of advancing in holiness and in the love of God, and the reason it is commonly otherwise is that it is not pursued with a view to Jesus Christ alone. "If you study from any other motive than that of piety, all your knowledge will serve only to make you more vain, more full of

may be said to contain a *résumé* of the history of the Seminary from the death of its founder to the Revolution.

yourselves, more self-opinionated and attached to your own private judgment; in a word, the more learned you become, the drier will be your devotion. To be learned without being puffed up is a miracle: '*Scientia inflat.*'* Yes, it is a miracle to see a learned man who does not hold himself in some esteem. The highest archangel was not proof against it; he could not keep his footing on the slippery path: '*In veritate non stetit.*'† The only true knowledge is to know that we are nothing, and clearly to discern our nothingness in the midst of our endowments. This pride, this vanity of the intellect, is the most dangerous, the most deadly of all; it is a vanity from which a man scarcely ever recovers, for human learning goes on increasing with age and experience.

"The great evil is that study is not pursued in a Christian spirit. To understand this aright, we must learn that there are three kinds of knowledge. The first is purely human: it is the knowledge of pagans, who studied only from a human motive, and solely in the strength of their own powers. They studied for a merely natural end: the satisfaction of their own mind, their own individual improvement, or the praise and esteem of men. The second, which is infused, is simply divine, and ranks among the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This it is that God anciently gave to the Apostles, and has bestowed on a great number of saints who had neither time for study nor the means of acquiring the knowledge necessary for their ministry. The third is human and divine together: it is the true and proper knowledge of Christians, and that of which the Wise Man speaks when he says, '*Dedit illi scientiam sanctorum, et complevit labores illius.*'‡ It is not given by infusion and without labour; it partakes of both one and the other. It is not a knowledge like that of Adam; it is of the nature of Christian grace and virtues, which are acquired with labour. By original sin, as we all know, man lost his right to the knowledge and to the virtues with which he was endowed in his state of innocence. Jesus Christ, by His merits, has obtained us the right and the power to acquire, but with labour, both knowledge and virtues."

Hence, to study in a Christian way there is need of three things: humility, penance, and zeal for God's glory. Convinced that in our-

* "Knowledge puffeth up." 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

† "He stood not in the truth." St. John viii. 44.

‡ "She gave him the knowledge of the holy things, and accomplished his labours." Wisdom x. 10.

selves we are nothing, we must have recourse to Jesus Christ, in whom God the Father has hidden all knowledge, to be by Him diffused through the Church; and we must look upon books as a sort of reservoir, in which Jesus Christ has stored it for our use. To keep this great truth ever before the minds of the students, M. Olier caused an image of our Blessed Lord to be placed in the library of the Seminary, with this inscription underneath: "*Quæcumque audivi à Patre meo, nota feci vobis;*" * and in a little book of *Interior Acts* which he composed for their use, he suggested a series of devout and humble aspirations to Jesus as the Eternal Wisdom and the Light of men. Further, he would have every one in his reading look to his director, both for subjects of study and the time he should devote to it; never retrenching his spiritual exercises in order to have more time to give to it, but, on the contrary, being the more assiduous in devotion, in order to escape the dangers to which intellectual pursuits are liable; renouncing all spirit of curiosity, stopping awhile to lift up the heart in prayer when sensible of overmuch activity and ardour; sighing from time to time for the perfect possession of God, in whom will be found the full and entire knowledge of that which here below we know so faintly and imperfectly.

So, too, in their public disputations he bade them argue, not to display their knowledge, but simply to ascertain the truth, if they were in doubt, or to confirm themselves in it, if they were sure of their grounds. To dispute from a motive of vanity, he said, was to pledge ourselves never to yield; it was to act the part of Lucifer, who would be content with nothing short of the highest throne in heaven. To confess one's own ignorance and acknowledge another's ability, as it was the part of true candour and humility, so it was torture to the proud. In the schools let them keep before their eyes, and adore in their hearts, Jesus Christ in the midst of the doctors. Although He had in Himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet He was found "*hearing them and asking them questions.*" † In imitation of this profound humility on the part of the Son of God, they were to beware of playing the master in their disputations, but comport themselves in such wise as to appear to be rather seeking to be enlightened than instructing and enlightening others.

* "All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you." St. John xv. 15.

† St. Luke ii. 46.

Certain rules which M. Olier put in writing on this subject are at once so wide in their application, so simple yet so noble, and so instinct with the purest generosity and kindness, that they must be given in his own words.

"Before disputing," he wrote, "you ought to have an assured conviction of your own ignorance, and to make an interior avowal of it before the Majesty of God, and in the presence of the Angels and all the Saints; then, ere you begin, invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit to be your guide in an act so full of peril, and in which it is so incumbent upon you to observe the rules of a just and holy moderation. In disputing let it be with the greatest charity, never seeking to confound your adversary, or pressing him hard; on the contrary, contrive to suggest some opening by which he may see his way out of the difficulties which embarrass him; in a word, do to him as you would wish that it should be done to you under like circumstances. If you feel any rising of pride within you, urging you to get the advantage of him, then you may make as though you were unable to solve the objections he proposes, question him in turn, and beg him to enlighten you. This is to give the death-blow to our own judgment, which is naturally so unwilling to submit. You ought to make this your practice, not only in discussion, but whenever you feel a strong desire to display your learning. Nevertheless, there are certain public occasions on which prudence demands a different course, and then you must content yourself with laying the desire interiorly before our Lord and begging Him to destroy it by virtue of His grace; and our Lord, seeing your fidelity, will not fail to hear you in the moment of danger."

The effect of these high principles of conduct persistently followed soon became apparent, not only in the intercourse of the students one with another, but in their influence upon the world without. One notable instance may here be given. M. Blanlo had obtained the highest distinction by his theological proficiency, his profound acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, of the latter of which languages he was made professor by the University of Paris. At the age of twenty-two he was chosen to fill the chair of philosophy in the Collège des Grassins, when, deeply impressed with the sanctity of M. Olier, he entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice, there to lead a hidden and mortified life, and to be as remarkable for his piety, modesty, and humility as in the world he had been distinguished for the extent and variety of

his attainments. He had a particular devotion to the Sacred Infancy of our Lord, in honour of which he wrote, under obedience, a little work which was published after his death. Once within the walls of the Seminary, his object seemed to be to conceal his eminent gifts. Chosen by M. Olier to give lectures in theology, he delivered them, as usual at the time, in the way of dictation, reading them apparently from a book which he held in his hand. One day, however, being called away from the class while thus engaged, a student had the curiosity to look into the book out of which he had been reading, when, to his astonishment, he found that it had nothing to say to the subject in hand, and that the professor had been really composing while he seemed to be merely dictating.

To M. Blanlo may be joined M. de Poussé, as representing the perfect Christian student. "During the eight years that I had the privilege of living with him in the Seminary," writes M. de Lantages, —who in his humility adds, "and afforded him an object whereon to exercise his extraordinary charity,—I beheld in him a rare example of all the virtues. His attention to the presence of God in the most indifferent actions was such that I prayed our Lord to make me as devout in reciting the Divine Office as was this holy man while walking in the streets or taking his repast. His study of sacred theology made him increase in wisdom, because he applied himself thereto with piety." M. Leschassier also says that during the first years M. de Poussé always studied kneeling on the ground, and so profound was his veneration for M. Olier that he learned by heart the subjects which the man of God had taken for his prayer and transcribed his writings on his knees. So perfect, too, was the confidence he reposed in him that he exposed to him the secrets of his interior with all the sincerity and obedience of a child, while M. Olier, on his part, regarded him with the deepest respect for his singular excellencies and, to render his talents the more available for the benefit of the Church, urged him to proceed to the Doctorate.

Both these good men were but practising in detail M. Olier's lessons, and realizing that great primary idea of his, as we have seen it developed in this chapter, the mortification of self—self-love, self-will, self-opinion, self-display—that Jesus Christ may be formed in the soul.

Among his heavy and unceasing labours the servant of God found time to compose a series of works which, though especially designed to promote the sanctification of the clergy, are equally serviceable to

the laity. Mention has already been made of three such publications, which have a close connection with each other: the *Catechism of the Interior Life*, in which he shows that the only solid foundation of Christian perfection is laid in the mortification of the passions and the death of the "old man" through the life of Jesus Christ energizing in the soul; the *Christian Day*, which may be regarded as its sequel, wherein he teaches his disciples to do all their actions in union with the Spirit of our Lord; and the *Introduction to the Christian Life and Virtues*, which is a fuller development of the same subject. For the particular use of the clergy he also wrote a *Treatise on the Sacred Orders*, of which it is sufficient to say that it is worthy of the man who had been specially chosen by God to be the reformer of the clerical body and the restorer of ecclesiastical discipline in the Church of France.

All these works, says M. Faillon, were less the fruits of his own reflections and researches than of the lights which God bestowed upon him in prayer. It was his habit to write immediately after this holy exercise, and so complete was the absorption of all his faculties in the work on which he was engaged, that he would remain writing on his knees for five or six hours together without pausing. His pen proceeded with such facility and rapidity that M. Baudrand says it seemed to be actuated by the very Spirit of God, and to impress vividly on the paper those divine truths which the gifts of wisdom and understanding, wherewith he was so wonderfully endowed, brought before him, as it were, in thronging urgent crowds. To this may be due the fact that in his writings he seems to be not so much proposing motives to persuade and to convince as giving expression to the sublime ideas which are being presented to his mind. Hence, on occasions, a certain obscurity in his compositions, such as is not unfrequently to be met with in the productions of those who have been favoured with divine illuminations. They are filled with thoughts and conceptions which they find it difficult, and indeed impossible, to formulate in words. Besides the works just mentioned, and his *Explanation of the Ceremonies of High Mass*,* he also composed a number of others which still remain in manuscript; including *Treatises on the Lord's Prayer*, *the Attributes of God*, *the Holy Angels*, *the Creation of the World*, and *the Life Divine*; a paper entitled *The Master of Exercises*, *Panegyrics of many Saints*,

* His *Explanation of the Ceremonies of High Mass* was begun when he first entered on his pastoral duties and was finished during his last illness.

and nine or ten volumes of *Mémoires*, of which his biographer has made large and constant use.

Among his published writings mention ought not to be omitted of his *Spiritual Letters*, a hundred and fifty in number, addressed to various persons, which were collected by M. Tronson. "They who were so happy," he says in his Preface, "as to have conversed familiarly with this man of God while he was on earth, will be pleased to see in this collection a part of those holy truths which they once heard him deliver with so much grace and unction; and they who never had the happiness of seeing him will, at least, have the consolation of hearing him discourse herein of various matters and contemplating a faithful portrait of the beauty of his mind and of his eminent virtues."

So little importance, however, did M. Olier attach to his writings, and so perfectly indifferent was he as to what might become of them, that he put them into his director's hands with fullest liberty of tearing them up or throwing them into the fire. In fact, M. de Bretonvilliers relates how he found him one day in the act of collecting his manuscripts together with a view to committing them to the flames, and had some difficulty in preventing him from carrying out his purpose. On being urged to publish certain of his writings, he at length consented in deference to his directors, who represented to him the spiritual good that might accrue from their perusal, but only on condition that his name should not appear; and this condition was observed until his death.

The Method of Prayer approved by M. Olier.

"He divides mental prayer into three parts: the preparation, the prayer itself, and the conclusion. The preparation is threefold: remote, less remote, and proximate; the first being occupied in removing obstacles, the second in preparing what is necessary for praying well, and the third being, as it were, the entrance into prayer. The more remote preparation may be said to extend over the whole life, and is principally occupied with three obstacles—sin, the passions, and the thought of creatures. The less remote preparation is concerned with three times; the time when the subject of prayer is given overnight, the time between then and waking in the morning, and the time from waking to beginning the prayer. The first requires attention; the second, a review of the subject, and strict silence; and the third, the affections of love and joy with which we should

approach prayer. The proximate preparation is almost a part of the prayer itself. It comprises three acts: 1. The putting ourselves in the presence of God; 2. The acknowledging ourselves unworthy to appear in His presence; 3. The confessing ourselves incapable of praying as we ought without the aid of divine grace. For each of these three preparations he gave very minute rules, all taken from ancient sources.

"The body of the prayer consists of—1, adoration; 2, communion; 3, co-operation. In the first we adore, praise, love, and thank God. In the second we try to transfer to our own hearts what we have been praising and loving in God, and to participate in its virtue according to our measure. In the third we co-operate with the grace we are receiving by fervent colloquies and generous resolutions.

"In adoration we contemplate the subject of the meditation in Jesus, and worship Him because of it in a becoming way. Hence there are two things to be observed in this first point. Suppose, for instance, the subject be humility; we first of all consider Jesus as humble, and in this again are included three things: our Lord's interior dispositions about humility, the words He said, and the actions He did; secondly, we lay at His feet six offerings—adoration, admiration, praise, love, joy, and gratitude, sometimes going through all of them, sometimes selecting such as harmonise with the subject of our prayer. This point is extremely important, as it leads us first to contemplate our Blessed Lord as the source of all virtues; secondly, to regard Him as the original exemplar of which grace is to make us copies; thirdly, of the two ends of prayer—the veneration of God and the petition of man—the first is the more perfect; fourthly, if we look to our own interests, of the two roads which lead to perfection—prayer and imitation—the first is the shortest, the most efficacious, and the most solid. To dip our souls, as it were, in the dye of the Heart of Jesus by love and adoration, is a quicker way to imbue them with a virtue than multiplied acts of the virtue itself would be.

"The second point is communion, by which we endeavour to participate in what we have been loving and admiring in the first. It contains three things. We have first to convince ourselves that the grace we desire to ask is important to us, and we should try to convince ourselves of this chiefly by motives of faith. The second thing is to see how greatly we are wanting in that grace at present, and how many opportunities of acquiring it we have wasted. The third and chief thing is the petition itself; and this petition may take four shapes, the types of which are in Scripture:—1, simple petition; 2, obsecration, which is the adding of some motive or adjuration, as by the merits of our Lord, or the graces of our Lady; 3, thanksgiving, for thanksgiving for past graces is the most efficacious petition for new ones; 4, insinuation, as when the sister of Lazarus said no more than, '*Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick*' (St. John xi. 3). All these petitions must be accompanied by four conditions—humility, confidence, perseverance, and the union of others in our prayers, as our Lord teaches us to pray for *our* daily bread, and forgive *us* our trespasses.

"The third point is the co-operation, in which we make our resolutions. In these resolutions three things are required: they must be particular, present, and efficacious. They must be particular, because general resolutions are of very little use except in union with particular ones. They must be present, that is, we must have some application of our resolution present to our minds, as likely to occur that day. They must be efficacious, that is, our subsequent care must be

to carry them out with fidelity, and we must fully intend to do so by an explicit intention at the time we make them.

"The conclusion of the prayer consists of three things, all of which are to be very briefly performed. First, we must thank God for the graces He has given us in our prayer, the grace of having endured us in His presence, of having given us the ability to pray, and of all the good thoughts and emotions we have experienced. Secondly, we must ask pardon for the faults we have committed in our prayer, negligence, lukewarmness, distraction, inattention, and restlessness. Thirdly, we must put it all into our Lady's hands to offer it to God, to supply all defects, and to obtain all blessings. Then follows the spiritual nosegay of St. Francis de Sales, that is, some thought for the day, to refresh us in the dust and turmoil of the world."—Abridged from Fr. Faber's *Growth in Holiness*, Chap. xv. pp. 256–262.

The Sulpician method, it will be seen, differs in form from the Ignatian. But —to quote Fr. Faber's words—"both of them are most holy, even though they are so different. There is a different spirit in them, and they tend to form different characters. But they cannot be set one against the other. They are both from one Spirit, even the Holy Ghost, and each will find the hearts to whom they are sent. Happy," he adds, "is the man who is a faithful disciple of either!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMMUNITY OF ST. SULPICE: ITS CONSTITUTION AND INTERIOR SPIRIT. ITS PRESERVATION FROM JANSENISM.

IN founding his seminary M. Olier had two objects in view. The first was that of forming young men for the ecclesiastical state; the second, and that which he deemed even more important, was the creation of a society devoted to the education of the clergy, which in its turn might lend its powerful aid in establishing similar institutions throughout the country. In selecting and forming the subjects of this society he proceeded wholly on supernatural principles. It was never his practice to invite any one to enter the Community, however strongly pronounced a vocation he might appear to possess; he left all in the hands of God. He desired that the Community should be the simple work of the Holy Spirit, and not the construction of human prudence; to this end he would employ no constraining influences nor permit any to be employed by others. The only power he called into operation was that of secret prayer and the Adorable Sacrifice of the Altar, that the will of God might be done, and His name glorified by means of such as He should Himself choose for His ministers. "Better," he would say, "receive one subject from the hand of God than a hundred thousand in any other way." Accordingly, it was the rule of the Seminary to treat a vocation to the Community as a matter which belonged solely to God; and, if any one showed the slightest inclination towards another kind of life, this alone was sufficient for his director to endeavour to turn his thoughts from entering the Society. M. Le Peletier, who became a member of St. Sulpice after M. Olier's death, says, expressly, in reference to his own case, that no inmate of the house ever made the least approach to a proposal that he should join them, or so much as spoke to him of the mode of life with a view of attracting him towards it; nay, he adds, that he was disappointed

at the manner in which his application for admission was received, and that he had to make it several times before the Superior appeared disposed to listen to him.

Abandoning himself thus to Divine Providence, M. Olier had, in the course of eight or ten years, without personal effort or persuasion, gathered within the walls of St. Sulpice as many as thirty or forty men whom it would have been difficult to match for intellectual powers, no less than for their piety and zeal and, above all, for their Apostolical detachment from the world; and he seemed to behold before his eyes the literal fulfilment of the promise he had received, that the Goodness of God would raise up a new order of beings sooner than the work he was called on to accomplish should fail for want of fellow-labourers. Among other remarkable vocations the following may be mentioned.

M. Gabriel Souart was a young man of great ability, in whose education no pains had been spared by his father, who intended to resign to him an appointment which he held in the household of the Duke of Orleans. Brought up at what, in the language of those days, was justly styled the *court* of this prince, he thought only of enjoying the pleasures and advantages which the world afforded, and had been affianced by his friends to a young lady of considerable wealth, to whom he was on the eve of being united. But God had other designs regarding him. One day when he was attending Mass at St. Sulpice, the priest whose duty it was to deliver the sermon was taken suddenly ill, and, on word being brought to M. Olier, he sent and begged M. Meyster, who happened at the time to be kneeling at the end of the church, to take the preacher's place. M. Meyster, who was always prepared, and able at a minute's notice to preach on any given topic, began by treating of the subject proper for the day; but, soon glancing off, as was not unusual with him, he proceeded to insist on the necessity of a man's examining his vocation, showing how difficult it was for any one to be saved in a state to which God had not called him; when, raising his voice, he exclaimed, as if transported in spirit, like one who had received a sudden illumination, "I have one such before me! I have one such before me!" At these words the young man felt as if a thunderbolt had struck him: he saw the peril in which he stood; he was about to engage himself for life, and he had done nothing to ascertain the will of God. His distress and agitation were so great that M. Meyster had no sooner descended from the pulpit than he

went and opened his whole mind to him, and, acting on the advice he gave, made a retreat at St. Sulpice under the direction of M. Olier. The result was that he broke off his marriage, received the tonsure, and offered himself to the servant of God, who (as we shall see hereafter) sent him into Canada with M. de Queylus.

As M. Meyster's name has been mentioned more than once in this history, some account of the tragical end of this extraordinary man will not be out of place. The effects produced by his preaching were such that M. du Ferrier called him "the first missioner of the age," and P. de Condren, who was little given to praise, said of him that he was "a man to be confronted with Antichrist." He was not a Sulpician, but spent his life in missionary labours. His death was accompanied with circumstances of the most awful character. He was giving a mission at Metz, and, none of the churches being large enough to contain the crowds that flocked to hear him, he addressed them from an eminence outside the town. One day, in proceeding to the place, the heat of the sun being very great, he felt much indisposed, but was preparing to deliver his sermon, when he was seized with a raving fit, during the paroxysms of which he gave utterance to blasphemies against God and cursed the day on which he was born. He was immediately conveyed to his lodgings, but took advantage of the temporary absence of one of his attendants to stab himself mortally with a knife. Before expiring, however, he recovered his senses, and made his confession to P. Bouchard of the Oratory, who had taken the direction of the mission in his place.

The event, as may be imagined, caused a great sensation at the time, and the most conflicting judgments were passed upon it. On account of his keeping up communications with the Oratory he was supposed by some to share the errors with which that body had already begun to be infected. But this was not the case, as is sufficiently proved by the respect, and almost veneration, with which M. Olier and others continued to speak of him after his death. The temptation to self-destruction is one with which God, in His mysterious dealings with the souls of His creatures, has permitted the holiest persons to be assailed ; and M. Meyster was plainly bereft of his senses, and therefore morally irresponsible, when, in a paroxysm of frenzy, he blasphemed God and inflicted on himself a deadly wound. In the midst of his Apostolical labours and astonishing successes this eminent servant of God had so great a dread of yielding to a feeling of vanity that he had begged to be humbled in the

sight of men, and to lose the good esteem in which he was everywhere held. And God, it would seem, thus granted his prayer. Or it may be that his death was intended as a monition to others that his eccentric modes of action (for such they seem to have been), though worthy of admiration in his individual case, could not safely be imitated. This opinion accords with that entertained of him by P. de Condren, as recorded in a previous chapter.*

M. de Bretonvilliers, who has been often named in these pages, was the son of a Secretary of the Council. Seeing the great esteem with which M. Olier was regarded, he conceived a strong desire to make his acquaintance, and was so moved by his conversation that he never quitted him without a desire to return. It was not long before he consulted the servant of God on the choice of a state of life; and on the 12th of January, 1643, M. Olier offered the Holy Sacrifice for the determination of his doubts. Immediately afterwards M. de Bretonvilliers came and told him that at the very moment of the Elevation he had felt himself called to the ecclesiastical state, and begged to be admitted into the Society. By M. Olier's direction the young man's desire was communicated to his father, who at first was astounded at the news, and required time for reflection; but, recollecting what had been once said to him by Père Georges, a Capuchin friar, who bade him watch carefully over the education of his son, for that he would one day be at the head of an important ecclesiastical community, he himself, on the 18th of June in the same year, took the young man to St. Sulpice and, after giving him his blessing, confided him to the charge of the Superior. Shortly after his admission, the servant of God observed to one of the Community that M. de Bretonvilliers was destined to be his successor: a prediction which eventually received a twofold fulfilment, for this ecclesiastic succeeded him first in his pastoral office, and then in the government of the Seminary, of which he was the second Superior. Of his fitness to take the place of so good and great a man we may form some opinion from the estimation in which he was held by M. Olier himself. "His charity," he writes, "seems to have no bounds; he has the faculty of infusing sweetness into all things; he carries about with him, as it were, an atmosphere of peace, tenderness, and joy. He is a centre of charity round which his brethren cluster; all feel the charm of his presence; averse to anything like display, he cannot endure that any one

* See page 66.

should know what he does for the poor and unfortunate or what he bestows upon them. A more generous charity was never seen; his hand is ever in his purse for those who are in need. His love of poverty is very great; he will not suffer a servant to accompany him; he delights in wearing shabby clothes; and his only desire seems to be to deprive himself of everything he possesses. His words have a wonderful power of touching souls; they who listen to him never wish to leave him, or that he should give over speaking, so redolent is everything he says of piety and spiritual consolation."

Although M. Olier, as has been said, never solicited any one to enter the Community, he did not the less implore the Father of Lights to put the desire into the hearts of those whom He judged fitted for the work. It was thus he acted in respect to M. Tronson, who was his second successor. This ecclesiastic, a son of a Secretary of the Cabinet of Louis XIII., was distinguished for his profound acquaintance with scholastic theology and the Holy Scriptures, as well as with the Fathers and the History of the Church; and it was said of him that, if he was not a doctor, he was capable of instructing doctors, being endowed with a particular gift of communicating to others the knowledge he possessed. Attracted by the sanctity of M. Olier, he took him as his director, and under his guidance made rapid progress in the way of perfection. The servant of God, deeply sensible, from the first moment he knew him, of the services he might render to the clergy, if God should call him to the work of the seminaries, continued for several years offering up prayers with this intention. Fearful, however, of running before Divine Providence he preserved the strictest silence on the subject, while M. Tronson, on his part, who already felt himself drawn towards the Community, said not a word to M. Olier, waiting till God should summon him.* At length, unable to resist any longer the attractions of grace, he besought permission to try his vocation at St. Sulpice. On the day he entered the house, M. Olier, then too

* M. Tronson, when Superior of the Seminary, thus wrote: "They who say that there are not subjects enough in St. Sulpice seem to me not to comprehend the spirit of M. Olier, nor to have sufficiently reflected on his conduct. He would never say a word in order to attract subjects; and I know it by my own experience. He judged that not many were wanted, and he believed that, when they were needed, recourse ought to be had to God rather than to human devices, in order to have none but those who were truly called. We have always had, by His mercy, as many as we required; let us pray that we may never have too many."—*Vie de M. Emery*, Vol. i. pp. 49, 50.

ill to leave his bed, ordered all the Community to assemble in the chapel, and sing a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving to God for a particular favour granted to the Seminary. This ebullition of holy joy was amply justified by the event. As Superior of St. Sulpice, as well as by his writings, M. Tronson won the confidence and respect of the clergy of France in a singular manner, and has left behind him a name which will be ever held in veneration by the society he governed. The great Fénelon, writing to Pope Clement XI., accounts it a glory and a happiness that he had been "nourished with the words of faith and formed to the clerical life" by one who was never, as he believes, surpassed for "love of discipline, ability, prudence, and piety, and, more than all, for sagacity in judging of men." Thus wonderfully did God provide for the efficient government of the Seminary as well as for its preservation from the destructive inroads of heresy.

It is in the rules and maxims which M. Olier laid down for the conduct of the noviciate, through which all who sought admission into the Community had to pass, that we may most clearly discern the spirit and genius of the new institution. The noviciate was, as we may say, the inner sanctuary of the edifice he had begun to rear; it was the school in which the teachers and directors of the Seminary were themselves to be trained and sanctified for the momentous task of forming the future priests of the Church. The inmates of this Interior Seminary, as the servant of God called it, were to be exercised in habits of self-annihilation, abnegation of their own will, patience, mortification, and other similar virtues, that they whose life was to be devoted to the service of priests might be the examples and the sources of the graces which it was their office to cultivate in others. To this end they were to practise, not only simplicity, but poverty. Their rooms were to be meanly furnished, and destitute of anything like ornament: content with a bed, a chair, a table, and a little picture to pray before, they would thus serve God in simple faith, unassisted by any of the helps or appliances of this world. To inspire a love and reverence for the house of God, and for its extrinsic and intrinsic beauty, as well as to nourish in themselves and others a meek and lowly spirit, they were to perform all the lowest offices about the church; to wash the altar-steps, dust the chairs and benches on which the clergy sat, and keep clean the whole interior of the choir. They were to be employed also from time to time in the duties of the sacristy, to put everything in its

place, and learn by experience the order which ought to be observed in all that related to Divine worship. As some of their future subjects would become canons of cathedral churches, be entrusted with the cure of souls, or employed in other ministrations, they were to be trained in performing all the ordinary functions which those whose instruction and formation they were destined to undertake might hereafter be called upon to discharge.

These rules will serve to indicate the thoroughness with which M. Olier strove to instil into his disciples a spirit of self-abjection and self-devotion in behalf of their brethren, and to inure them to its exercise. For himself, as we have seen, he had made a vow of particular and perfect servitude to the Church, and especially to its ministers, and he directed that every member of the Community, at such time as he seemed capable of doing so, should be called upon to make a personal dedication of himself to the same special end. It was in the shape of a protestation, by which each offered himself to the Eternal Father, with the assistance of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Perfect Victim, to live, after His example, in perpetual dispositions of sacrifice and servitude to the last moment of his life; and consecrated himself to the adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament, by which these sentiments are nourished and sustained in souls. The import of this profession he thus explained: "The spirit of servitude to Christ and to the Church implies obedience to the least of the members of the Church, whose servants we are. It implies poverty, in so far that we have nothing of our own; for that which a serf acquires he acquires for his lord, not for himself. It implies humility, making us lie in spirit at the feet of all, as the serf must do in respect to his master; and every individual member of the Church must be held to be our master. It implies love of suffering, inasmuch as we must endure every species of contempt, opprobrium, affliction, and pain in the service of the Church. There is nothing, whether of heat or cold, hunger or thirst, toil, slight, or contradiction, which the servant must not endure to further the interests of his master, even though they proceed from the master himself, receiving with meekness and submission all the ill-treatment he may choose to inflict, and endeavouring in all humility to regain his favour.

"The spirit of servitude is, properly speaking, a great purity of intention, with an ardent desire of the glory of our Master. So far from being jealous when He is loved, honoured, and glorified by

others more than by ourselves, we experience, on the contrary, a feeling of perfect complacency; and this is a sign that we do not seek ourselves in our labours, and are not acting in the spirit of a hireling. To acquit ourselves, then, as true and faithful servants, we ought at the beginning of an action to remember what our Lord says: '*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.*' For example, in preaching we must first renounce the esteem of men; in confessing we must renounce all self-complacency; in prayer, our own satisfaction and our own tastes; in receiving Communion, all seeking after the gifts of God; in conversing we must renounce the desire of being loved by men or pleasing them; in eating and drinking, all sensuality; in study, curiosity; in dress, all self-display; in the practice of virtue, all complacency in our own perfection; in all things we must act, through faith, according to the intentions of Jesus Christ, and unite ourselves to the intentions which He had of honouring and pleasing His Father. . . . This implies a great mortification of the natural desires and appetites, which we must have subdued in no little degree; a great love for our Lord, together with an ardent desire to promote His glory, feeling nothing stronger in us, nothing which has greater dominion over us; in fine, a sincere love of the Cross, of contempt, poverty, suffering, so that in the service of our Master we may meet with no obstacle to stay our progress.

"From this spirit of servitude comes that of immolation, which implies a disposition to die to self, and to live to God alone, awaiting but the time and the occasion to sacrifice ourselves to Him for the good of His Church. In our quality of victims, we are reckoned as no longer belonging to the world, so that we are ignorant of its laws, its ceremonies, its habits, its language, and are conversant only with the ceremonies of the Church, the praises of God, the service of His temple; remembering that of old the victims were separated from the flock and removed from the fold, that they might abide in the Temple of God: they no longer lived for themselves, being destined for sacrifice; and so ought we to have lost all care of our body, all solicitude about health, all attachment to life. If we eat, it must be as the victims in the Temple, ever in close sight of the altars and under the very edge of the knife, awaiting death, and preserving life only for the moment of sacrifice. They ate in order to die, rather than to live; and thus it must be with him who lives in this spirit of immolation. He must be as an angel would be in a human body; he must keep his eyes fixed ever on God, tend-

ing to Him incessantly, to love, adore, and serve Him, as a pure flame which rises and tends towards heaven; or, rather, as Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, who would make us partakers of His spirit of immolation by giving us to eat of His Sacred Flesh."

Such, in epitome, were the maxims which M. Olier laid down as the foundations on which the future members of his community were to form their spiritual life; and to these he appended two practical rules, to the observance of which he attached much importance. One was a weekly confession, in common, of the faults which each might have committed against the principal Christian virtues and his clerical profession. The other was a private self-examination every evening on the points contained in the following schedule, a copy of which, in their own handwriting, was to be hung up in their respective rooms:—

"Have you been wanting in the love of the Cross?

"Or in the love of poverty, suffering, and contempt?

"Or in the hatred of yourselves, seeking yourselves in your actions, instead of renouncing all self-satisfaction and all self-interest?

"Have you failed as respects the love of your enemies, or interior religion, by neglecting to refer your actions to God, or to our Lord Jesus Christ?

"Have you been wanting in exterior devotion in church, and, in particular, in any of the divine offices, or other duties of religion?

"Have you walked the whole day in the presence of Jesus Christ, having His interior everywhere before your eyes, to adore it, and to form it in yourselves?

"Have you been faithful in recollecting yourselves at the beginning of each work, as you are directed?

"Have you lived according to faith, regarding and esteeming all things as Jesus Christ regards and esteems them?

"Have you manifested Jesus Christ in your conduct?

"His sweetness, humility, patience, charity, obedience, and forbearance?

"Have you, among other virtues, practised that which especially becomes clerics, modesty?

"Have you lived in the spirit of servitude towards Jesus Christ and His members?

"Have you lived also in the spirit of immolation?"

But, above all things, M. Olier taught his disciples to go frequently before the Holy Tabernacle, thence to derive that spirit of servitude and immolation of which Jesus Christ is the living spring. In a little work which he entitled the *Piety of the Seminary of St. Sulpice*, he prescribes three means for replenishing themselves with this spirit: the Blessed Eucharist, as already related; the Cross; and the Gospel. Next to the August Sacrament of the Altar the Community were to venerate the Cross of the Saviour, which exhibits to us His works. They were to embrace that Cross in its bareness, poverty, and contempt. They were to carry it with joy, never wearied with calumnies and persecutions, and to pray they might die upon it in union with Jesus. Priests and clerics were, therefore, to fly with horror from all worldly pomps, from all that flatters the senses, all that gratifies the eyes, the ears, the taste, the touch. Every one was to maintain in himself this state of death, living only in a spirit of penance, chastise his body and bring it ever into subjection, at the beginning of every action renounce his own spirit and abandon himself to that of Jesus. Further, in order to follow Jesus with greater facility and to contemplate without ceasing His divine perfections, they were ever to carry about them, together with the image of Christ crucified, the Most Holy Gospel; and, as He dwells in the Blessed Eucharist with all the sentiments of His Heart and all His adorable virtues, they were to beg and confidently seek in that Most Holy Sacrament grace to follow the examples and observe the precepts which they had learned to venerate in the Sacred Book.

In order not to omit anything which may illustrate the interior spirit of the institute, we will here cite a passage from the *Mémoires* of M. Henri de la Combe Baudrand which may be taken as a summary of M. Olier's teachings on the subject.

"The priests of the Seminary of St. Sulpice," he wrote, "are to be wholly devoted to the worship of the Most Holy and Most August Trinity. Their silence and retirement within the Seminary is to be to them a means of honouring the silence and repose of the Three Divine Persons in heaven; and, as all the treasures of nature and of grace and all the mysteries of the Man-God are the fruits and issues of this great Mystery, all their actions and their whole conduct are to tend to Its honour. Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Priest, is to reign in their hearts, and, as He came only to be the priest and the victim immolated to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity, the priests of the

Seminary must be priests and victims consumed in the fire of His love and immolated to His service. They are, by their very character, only the extension of His eternal priesthood; they must, then, be filled with His life and His spirit, they must be clothed with His states of abasement and of glory, and penetrated with His sentiments, His mysteries, and His virtues.

"Their union with the Mother of Jesus must be unceasing. They are bound to acknowledge that their power is but an effluence of her divine maternity. As her fecundity, which is all holy, is founded on the power of the Eternal Father and terminates only in her Son, the Saint of saints, so their priesthood is exercised only by the power of the Eternal Father, of which they partake, and terminates only in Jesus, whom they produce on our altars and sacrifice to His glory. The life of Jesus in Mary, in her fervour and zeal for God, must be the life that animates them. Their interests are the interests of Jesus, their spirit and desires are the desires and the Spirit of Jesus living in His holy Mother.

"To honour God; to love Jesus and Mary; to bear with patience and love the share which He gives him in His crosses; to lay himself at the feet of all, and especially of the ecclesiastics for whose sanctification he labours; to be attached to them only in order to establish in their hearts the reign of God, and to maintain towards them the spirit of a loving and unfailing servitude; to live in the world separated from the world, without seeking to find therein anything save the cross, the sanctification of priests, and the salvation of souls; to look for nothing from any creature whatsoever, but to look for all from God alone; to live without vows, but to be more pliant and more submissive to superiors than are they who are bound by vows,—this is something of what is required to be a priest of the Seminary of St. Sulpice."

To maintain among his ecclesiastics that spirit of detachment and disinterestedness which he deemed essential to the existence of the institution, M. Olier would have them receive no sort of stipend or remuneration, however small, but be content with the food and clothing which the Society provided. Not that he would have them make a vow of poverty, or strip themselves of such property as they chanced to possess; on the contrary, he would never allow M. de Bretonvilliers to take such vow or make such renunciation, although he sought permission long and earnestly. "Renounce," he said, "the use of worldly goods, but retain their possession. You will

thus abide in the state in which Providence has placed you; your goods will be employed to His glory, and you will possess all the benefits of poverty, which consist in having nothing to prevent our belonging to God alone: '*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*'" * This, indeed, was the sort of poverty of which he himself gave his disciples the example. For several years he neither disposed of his property nor made any personal use of it; nay, so little conversant was he with money matters that he could not keep his own accounts, and on more than one occasion showed an absolute ignorance of the value of certain coins, saying with genuine simplicity, "You see I am not fit for this sort of thing."

But of all the duties and practices of the priestly and the Christian life there was none which the servant of God more sedulously strove to inculcate on his Community than the renunciation of their own will and judgment, and that this lesson had been thoroughly learned was exemplified in the conduct of M. d'Hurtevent, one of his first and most fervent disciples. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon, who was well acquainted with the merits of this ecclesiastic, was desirous of entrusting to him the education of her nephew, the Abbé de Richelieu; † and M. Olier, considering that to form the mind and character of a young cleric so highly connected and likely, in consequence, to occupy a prominent position in the Church would be rendering an essential service to religion, advised M. d'Hurtevent to accept the charge. This accordingly he did, simply because the mere intimation of a wish on the part of one whom he so deeply revered had to him all the weight of a command, but with a feeling of repugnance which it would be difficult to express. So completely, however, did he conceal every symptom of aversion, and so admirably did he act his part in the courtly society with which he was compelled to mix, that several well-intentioned but ill-judging persons persuaded themselves that he had cordially adopted the fashions of the world and would become estranged from the Seminary, if not from sacerdotal and ecclesiastical life altogether. Acting upon this persuasion, they communicated their impressions to M. Olier, who, as sometimes happens even to those whom God has gifted with the power of reading the secrets of hearts, being left

* St. Matthew v. 3.

† He died January 9th, 1665, attended by his sorrowing aunt. Of her three nephews, whom she had adopted and treated with an affection truly maternal, he was the only one who showed her any gratitude or respect.

without any lights upon the matter, accepted their views, and by a certain coldness and reserve of manner showed that his countenance was no longer towards him as before. M. d'Hurtevent, perceiving the change and knowing by experience that the man of God was wont to discern faults in his disciples of which they were themselves unconscious, or which they were trying to conceal, was greatly distressed in mind, thinking there must be something in his conduct which merited reproof. Having, however, become acquainted, after a while, with the representations which had been made regarding him, he showed how well he had profited by the maxims which had been taught him ; for, instead of enlightening M. Olier as to his real sentiments, or seeking for sympathy elsewhere, he put a generous constraint on himself and chose rather to appear as an ingrate in his eyes than to shrink from embracing the cross, hard as it was to bear, which was laid upon him. He chose (to adopt the words of M. Faillon) to let his soul be steeped awhile in gall and bitterness, thereby to honour the adorable dispositions of our Lord in the ignominies of His Passion, and would have endured the torment all his days but for the pain which he saw he was inflicting on his master's tender heart. Accordingly, he sought an explanation, and the cloud of misunderstanding was at once dispersed.

The Life of M. de Lantages affords an instance scarcely less remarkable of the influence which M. Olier exerted over those who were about him and of the implicit submission which they paid to his directions. This ecclesiastic was, as we have seen, a priest before he entered the Seminary, but he was assailed with such violent scruples that he felt as if he were guilty of a sacrilege every time he ascended the steps of the altar. In his distress he besought M. Olier to dispense him from offering the Holy Sacrifice every day or, at least, to allow him to make his confession every morning before doing so. But, on being ordered to say Mass daily and not to make his confession oftener than once a fortnight, he blindly obeyed in spite of the terrors with which he still continued to be haunted. His obedience had its reward ; for the long and severe trial he underwent not only enabled him to make rapid progress in the ways of divine love, but won for him the gift of relieving persons similarly afflicted, and particularly priests.

But strict and, apparently, even severe as he was in requiring from his subjects an entire subjection and immolation of themselves in all that related to their special vocation, M. Olier insisted no less

strongly on the general duty of taking care of their health. This is evident from his letters, one of which may here be cited. The reader will not fail to observe how perfectly in harmony the advice he gives is with those supernatural principles to which he referred everything. "I pray you may have the grace," he writes, "to avail yourself where you are of all the benefits which the air, the fine weather, and the remedies prescribed are capable of rendering, for the improvement of your health. You have vowed and consecrated it to God; you know that it belongs to Jesus Christ, by the right He possesses over all creatures of employing them to promote the glory of His Father, and, in particular, by the choice He has made of you to serve Him in His Church. Jesus Christ has made over His rights to His Church, and she may justly claim the service of your body for the good of His children. See, then, to how many masters you belong, to how many you are responsible, and whether you can with justice refuse them the preservation of your health. Wherefore be careful of it, forgetting yourself, and simply obeying your superiors."

The Noviciate of the Community at the time M. Olier prescribed the rules which have here been given was not a separate house, but was included in the general institute; whence the name by which he called it—the Interior Seminary, or Seminary within the Seminary. It is not quite clear at what date the Noviciate became a separate residence, but it certainly originated with M. Olier, although it was not definitively inaugurated till a year or two after his death. It was established at first* in the château of Avron, which had belonged for a long period to the family of M. de Bretonvilliers, who, on the death of his brother, bestowed it on the Seminary, and it was ever after known as the Solitude. Besides being at a convenient distance from the capital and enjoying a salubrious air, it had also the advantage of possessing a domestic chapel. Here were received all who aspired to become members of the Community, as well as such ecclesiastics as were sent by the Bishops to be trained for the direction of similar institutions in the provinces, and those candidates for the priesthood who were of maturer age than the rest. It was, moreover, a place of retirement and retreat. The spot had a particular attraction in M. Olier's eyes from its being in the proximity

* In the early editions of his work M. Faillon had stated that the Noviciate was first settled at Vaugirard, but subsequent enquiry led him to change his opinion.

of a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels,* which was an ancient place of pilgrimage. It was a very frequent resort of the novices; indeed, it became a rule of the house that once every month two of their number should pay a devotional visit to the shrine on behalf of the Seminary.

Subsequently the Noviciate was transferred to Issy, where the Seminary still has its country-house. The place had belonged to Marguerite de Valois, first wife of Henri IV., and in 1655 was purchased, with its furniture, of M. Antoine de Sève by M. de Bretonvilliers for the use of the Community. When he was dying, he gave his colleagues the option of having the house itself or the price it had cost him; and they chose the former because (as we shall see) it had been blessed with the presence of their holy founder during the last years of his life. It stood within an enclosure of sufficient extent to be styled a park, but was itself of small dimensions. It was afterwards enlarged, and a chapel was added by M. Tronson, after the model of that of the Holy House of Loreto. The chapel was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of *La Reine des Cœurs*, and at the end of the last century contained a vast number of votive offerings in the shape of hearts, all silver-gilt, which had been presented by prelates and other ecclesiastics, and were suspended to the lattice-work which separated the chapel from the Holy House. At the breaking out of the Revolution ninety-six of these silver hearts were sent to the mint. One offering was of a singularly touching character. It had been sent by the savages of Montréal in Canada, and was composed of little stones of different colours, all in the shape of hearts, and equal in number to the Christians in their tribe. The library was remarkable for a large collection of works relating to the Blessed Virgin. It was here that the conferences on Quietism were held, which lasted seven or eight

* Tradition assigns its origin to three foreign merchants, who were robbed and then hanged upon trees near the spot, but were miraculously delivered by the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, who appeared to them surrounded with a multitude of angels. In thanksgiving they erected a chapel, which became one of the most famous places of pilgrimage in the diocese of Paris. It was rebuilt, in 1663, by the Canons Regular of the Congregation of France, to whom the neighbouring Abbey of Livry belonged. At the Revolution it was demolished, but a new building has since arisen out of its ruins, where Mass is said on all feasts of the Blessed Virgin, and especially on the feast and during the octave of her Nativity, when the concourse of people is still considerable. Near it is a holy well, to the waters of which curative virtues are ascribed.

months, and at which Bossuet, Fénelon, and Cardinal de Noailles were present.*

During the night of May 12th, 1871, a bombshell, launched by the insurgents, fell on the chapel of Our Lady of Loreto, which was set on fire and entirely consumed. The image of the Blessed Virgin, which for many years had stood in the Holy House in Italy, and was the object of a special devotion, remained uninjured by the flames and was conveyed by pious hands to what was supposed to be a place of safety; but during the pillage that followed it disappeared and has never been recovered. The chapel, however, has been restored, and on April 17th, 1872, was consecrated by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris.

We will now recur to a subject which, while it shows the perilous trials and assaults to which the Seminary was exposed, constitutes one of its peculiar glories and, we may add, one of its strongest claims to the gratitude of all true Catholics.

Jansenism, as has been said, never gained even a temporary footing within the walls of St. Sulpice. This honourable distinction was doubtless due, as long as M. Olier lived, to his untiring vigilance and zeal; and that, at a time when there was scarcely a religious house in France into which this pernicious heresy had not penetrated with the most disastrous results, he should have succeeded in preserving his community from its influences must be reckoned among his highest titles to our admiration and respect. But, what is still more remarkable, the Seminary of St. Sulpice ever continued to enjoy the same exemption from Jansenistic infection; and there are circumstances which seem to show that this was a special favour of Heaven, and one integrally connected with the original mission of its founder.

The reader will recollect that in establishing the seminary at Vaugirard M. Olier had two associates, who made their solemn act of consecration with him in the church of Montmartre, and might

* Mr. Allies who visited Issy in 1845 describes the Maison de Campagne of St. Sulpice as "an old royal château, much dilapidated, for" (he adds) "the good seminarists do not pretend to much comfort in their house; it would seem as if they intended their discipline to serve as a winnowing fan for all light and worldly spirits. They have, however, spacious gardens behind. We were shown a summer-house in which Bossuet and Fénelon held a long conference on the subject in dispute between them, and agreed on statements together, which are put up in the room." *Journal in France*, p. 87.

equally have been regarded as founders of the society. These were M. de Foix and M. du Ferrier, the former of whom was for a short time at the head of the Community. But from the first the Spirit of God had made known to M. Olier that the work was in some especial way his own and not theirs; that they were his appointed fellow-helpers in inaugurating the design, but that its consummation lay wholly with himself. "I will not give to others the spirit of paternity," was the word that was spoken interiorly to him; and this secret intimation was singularly fulfilled. M. Olier was the actual founder of St. Sulpice; no one could dispute the title with him; and it was his mind, his genius, that ruled and ordered everything. The Seminary was the embodiment of his ideas, or, rather, it was the realization of the divine plan of which he had been made the depositary. And, as if to leave no doubt in men's minds as to the authorship of the work, he alone of the "Three Solitaries of Vaugirard" was destined to remain a member of the Community. Nor, as we are about to see, was this the only design of Providence in permitting the departure of his two associates.

On the removal of the society from Vaugirard to Paris, M. de Foix was made Director of the new seminary; and, as M. Olier at first was principally occupied with the reform of the parish, he had almost the sole superintendence of the house; his exhortations and personal example exercised a most powerful influence over the minds of the students, and by M. Olier no less than by the ecclesiastics generally he was regarded as one of the mainstays of the institute. When, therefore, it became known that, on the recommendation of St. Vincent de Paul, he had been nominated by the Queen Regent to the vacant see of Pamiers the feeling excited at St. Sulpice was one of simple grief and dismay. M. de Foix himself was no less sensibly afflicted at the thought of the burden which it was sought to impose upon him, and protested that in consenting to assume the episcopal office he should be withdrawing from a post to which he had been summoned by a particular attraction of grace, and abandoning a vocation which had been blessed with many and signal marks of the Divine favour. Unwilling, however, to act on his own impulse, he resigned himself entirely to the decision of M. Olier, as his superior, who, as may be supposed, bearing in mind the solemn engagements into which his colleague had entered at the first foundation of the society, and the positive injunctions of P. de Condren as to refusing all ecclesiastical preferments, counselled him

to persevere in his resolution and to decline the proffered dignity. The Queen, however, continuing to press the matter, at the end of three months M. Olier began to fear lest his reluctance to lose so useful and, as it appeared, so necessary a subject, should have insensibly biassed his judgment; he resolved, therefore, to consult P. Tarrisse, and to be determined by his advice in conjunction with that of St. Vincent. The decision of these two great servants of God was strongly in favour of complying with the Queen's behests; and M. Olier, sacrificing at once his own personal wishes and the apparent advantage of the Community, submitted to the decision and bade M. de Foix prepare for consecration. This accordingly took place in the Church of St. Sulpice, on the 5th of March, 1645, in the presence of the Community and of a large number of the parishioners, who were deeply touched by the recollection and devotion of the new prelate; the abundance of tears that flowed from his eyes indicating, as it seemed to them, the well of devotion that lay hidden in the depths of his heart.

M. Olier was much blamed for allowing M. de Foix to quit the Seminary, there being a general persuasion that his presence and co-operation were indispensable for the success and, indeed, for the very existence of the institute. But M. Olier, although the loss of such a man was apparently irremediable, had regard simply to the will of God, who, as he said, was the Father and the Master of the house and would never abandon the work He had begun. So entirely was he absorbed in the one idea of furthering the designs of Providence that, at a time when the Community could ill afford any diminution of its numbers, he desired several of his most efficient priests to accompany M. de Foix to Pamiers for the purpose of assisting him in the work of his diocese, which stood in great need of reformation, and in the establishment and direction of his episcopal seminary. The high estimation in which he held this prelate is evident from the terms in which he spoke of him to one of these very priests. "Cultivate," he said, "the advantage you enjoy with Monseigneur de Pamiers in his holy conversation, and in the example of his admirable virtues, which you will not easily find elsewhere. Assist this prelate of rare excellence, who is left without aid, and is so deserving of all help." M. de Pamiers, on his side, ever manifested the greatest respect and affection for M. Olier, whom he did not scruple publicly to call "a man inspired by God to dispense His special graces to the Church of France."

Whenever he came to Paris he took up his residence at St. Sulpice, presided at its solemn functions, and occasionally preached in the parish church. It may well be conceived that such a man would oppose with all his energies the spread of the new opinions. Accordingly, we find him, both before and after M. Olier's death, consulting one while with St. Vincent, at another with the priests of St. Sulpice, as to the best measures for bringing back to their allegiance such as had been seduced into resisting the authority of the Church; and he was in the habit of saying that, if these novelties came from God, they would not produce, as unhappily was too apparent, such manifold fruits of rebellion, pride, and apostasy.

Such was the Bishop of Pamiers during the first twenty years of his episcopate. Who then could have supposed that a prelate who had hitherto been a model of the ecclesiastical virtues and a vigorous opponent of the new doctrines should, a very few years after the death of M. Olier and that of St. Vincent de Paul, have become one of the most strenuous defenders of Jansenism? Yet such is the miserable fact. The former Abbé de Foix is no other than the too celebrated François-Etienne de Caulet, one of the four Bishops who opposed the *Formulary*, as it is called, of Alexander VII. and fomented a most lamentable division in the Church. That he should have quitted the Seminary, and that, too, so soon after its establishment, must, therefore, be regarded as a visible sign of the Divine protection; for how calamitous might the result have been to that rising institution had he continued during the twenty years he survived M. Olier to be numbered among its members! Joint founder with that holy man of the house at Vaugirard, first Director of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, his experience, his numerous virtues and unquestionable abilities, and the marked ascendancy which he exercised over the minds of others, would have pointed him out as, without dispute, the man most capable and most worthy of succeeding M. Olier as Superior of the Society; and in this case the same misfortune would have befallen St. Sulpice as actually befell the Oratory, in spite of the fidelity and zeal displayed by many of the latter body. St. Sulpice also would have yielded before the insidious attack of the Jansenistic faction, and its history would have borne the stains of a like dishonour.*

* The Congregation of the Oratory had become infected with Jansenism before it was subjected to the baneful influence of P. Quesnel and other professors of St. Magloire, and the Bull *Unigenitus*, issued by Clement XI. in 1713, was accepted

The three other prelates were M. Pavillon, Bishop of Aleth, M. de Buzenval, Bishop of Beauvais, and M. Arnauld, Bishop of Angers. M. Pavillon was one of the ecclesiastics who, in conjunction with M. Olier, commenced the Conferences of St. Lazare; he long enjoyed the confidence both of the Superior of St. Sulpice and of St. Vincent de Paul; indeed it was through the influence of the latter that he was promoted to the see of Aleth, and M. Olier lent him some of his most zealous priests, with M. de Queylus at their head, to assist him in reforming his diocese. By the high reputation he acquired for self-denial and austerity of life, he may be said to have "made the fortune" of the Jansenistic party; but "obedience is better than sacrifices:" he resisted the supreme authority of Christ in His Church, and all his specious virtues were but as gilding on a mausoleum of the dead. The first symptoms betrayed by this prelate, as by his friend, the Bishop of Pamiers, over whom he exercised a fatal influence, of a leaning towards the Jansenists was an unwillingness to commit himself by a public condemnation of their tenets, on the plea of promoting peace and preventing schism. By this course both were able for a space to dissemble their opinions; or it would probably be more true to say that their want of fidelity in not declaring openly for the truth, which, in fact, was tantamount to tampering with error, had time to develop into positive resistance to the commands of the Holy See: an act from which they would in the first instance have shrunk with horror. By the *Formulary* of Alexander VII. (1665) they were called upon to reject and condemn the five points of the Jansenistic heresy extracted from the *Augustinus* of Jansenius, *in the sense of the author*, as the Holy See had condemned them. But, while they declared their willingness to condemn the propositions, they refused to subscribe to the *fact* that the propositions were in substance contained

in 1746 only after long and lamentable contentions among its members. On the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1764, the Oratory took the fatal step of introducing laymen into their houses as associates in order to strengthen and extend their educational operations. Many of these became imbued with the false principles of the time, and grievous scandals thence ensued. To their credit, however, it must be recorded that the Fathers, with a few exceptions, refused to take the constitutional oath, and in 1792 the Society ceased to have any official or corporate existence. In the year 1852 the Oratory was reconstituted by P. Pététot, Curé of St. Roch, under the title of the "Oratory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Immaculate Virgin Mary," and on March 22nd, 1864, the revived institution received the approval and confirmation of the Holy See. See *L'Oratoire de France au xvii^e^ et au xix^e^ Siècle*, par P. Adolphe Perraud.

in the book of Jansenius; and on this latter point they claimed to preserve what they called a reverential silence. Under Clement IX., however, they consented to subscribe, and to oblige their subjects to subscribe, the condemnation of the five points without any restriction or limitation; and this is called the *Peace of Clement IX.* It may here be observed that, until the five propositions were condemned by the Holy See, the Jansenists held them to be true, and to be contained in the book of Jansenius; but no sooner were they condemned than they publicly maintained the contrary, while privately adhering to their original opinion. The doctrines condemned, they said, were not true doctrines, but then they were not contained in the *Augustinus.* By this subterfuge they thought to be able to hold their heresy while affecting to disavow it.

The departure of M. de Foix from the Seminary was soon followed by that of M. du Ferrier. The motives that led to his retirement do not distinctly appear, but from his *Mémoires* it is clear that it was sorely against his own will, for he speaks of leaving St. Sulpice with as much pain and grief as if he were being led to execution. There is reason, however, to believe that it was a measure of precaution on the part of M. Olier; and, indeed, it may be gathered from the Letters of M. Tronson that M. du Ferrier was one of those who, though not Jansenists in doctrine, were on such terms of intimacy with certain members of the party as to be unwilling to take a side against them, who spoke of them with esteem, and approved, or, at least, did not discourage, the reading of their books. After filling the office of grand-vicar in several dioceses for the space of thirty-seven years, he fell into disgrace with the Court for supporting the Bishop of Pamiers in resisting the encroachments of the civil power, and in 1680 was banished to Tonnerre; thence, four years later, he was sent to the Bastille, where he died in the sixth year of his imprisonment and the seventy-seventh of his age.

After the retirement of M. du Ferrier several others quitted the Seminary, in consequence of their favourable dispositions towards the new opinions, among whom was his brother, M. de Cambiac, who for some time had entertained thoughts of entering the Community of St. Merry. His departure under such circumstances was the cause of much grief to M. Olier, who, in his letters written at the time, speaks of him in terms of the utmost affection and charity. For six or seven years the Jansenistic party endeavoured,

with the help of the seceders, to shake M. Olier's authority at St. Sulpice, but, finding all their efforts fruitless, they sought by means of his former colleague, the Bishop of Pamiers, to introduce into the Seminary men who might exercise some sort of countervailing influence. But here again their attempts were entirely unsuccessful. To all that prelate's exhortations to call in the aid of sound advisers, the servant of God replied that they were in the habit of consulting M. Vincent (de Paul) on any extraordinary occasion, and on ordinary occasions they did not fail to convene a meeting of the whole Community. "As for those," he added, "who have set themselves up to judge everything, and condemn whatever they have not the ordering of, we have but small need of their advice."

Baffled at every point, and unable to gain the smallest influence within the Seminary, the Jansenists determined, as already related, on bringing into the Faubourg St. Germain the Fathers of the Oratory, many of whom were among the warmest defenders of the new opinions and, as such, in direct antagonism to M. Olier and the Sulpicians. Indeed, as we learn from a letter which the servant of God addressed to P. Bourgoing, the then Superior of the Oratory, to whom the motives of his conduct had been misrepresented, one of that Society, and he a person of no little consideration (meaning P. Camus), had not scrupled to say, in the presence of one of the priests of St. Sulpice, in reference to a member of the Jansenistic party, "He does not, it is true, do as many works as M. Olier, but—*omnia infidelium opera sunt peccata*," * a speech, it is needless to remark, as much opposed to orthodoxy as to charity. To secure the success of their project they put in requisition the most powerful influences of which they were possessed, in the persons of the Duke of Orleans and the President De Maison, the declared protectors of the Oratory, with whose assistance they entertained no doubt of obtaining the support of the Queen Regent. The occasion they chose was also a most favourable one for furthering their suit, for the Court was on the eve of re-entering Paris, after the first troubles of the Fronde, and at this time the Duke was a firm adherent of the royalist cause. At St. Sulpice, as we are told by M. Olier, the greatest consternation prevailed; its inmates were convinced that the establishment of the Oratory would involve the ruin of the Seminary, and that, if in the midst of the thousand

* "All the works of unbelievers are sins."

contradictions which the enemy of all good was every day raising against them, in order to force them to abandon their work and the reformation of the parish, they should have to encounter a powerful Congregation which was at open war with them, they would infallibly be compelled to give way and to betake themselves elsewhere.

M. Olier, meanwhile, preserved his usual calmness, but, afraid of acting at his own dictation, he kept himself in complete seclusion for the space of eight days, which he spent in silence and in prayer. He then repaired to the Abbé de St. Germain, in the hopes that through him, as his ecclesiastical superior, God would be pleased to make known His will. That prelate no sooner saw him enter than he at once began speaking of the Oratorians, and declared that nothing would induce him to permit their establishing themselves in the parish, convinced as he was that the majority of that body were deeply tainted with the Jansenistic errors. The like happened also in the case of the Regent herself. When M. Olier went to present his congratulations in person, as the other Curés of Paris had done some days previously, the Queen volunteered to inform him that, having heard from the Abbé of the design which the Oratorians entertained, she had forbidden his compliance. God seemed thus to have taken the matter out of His servant's hands, and he, therefore, felt emboldened to act with confidence in opposing the movements of the Oratory, a course to which, considering his former relations with the Society, he had naturally been much averse.

In this resolution he was confirmed by a signal favour which was at this time accorded to him. The Blessed Virgin by a particular manifestation, the manner of which he does not relate, promised him her continued protection, and bade him rest assured that the establishment in contemplation would never take place, although the highest powers in France should conspire to bring it about and the whole world should believe or fear that so it would be. As a perpetual acknowledgment of this mercy, she desired that he should engage to render some special honour to her "glories" for a quarter of an hour daily. This was the origin of a practice which has been strictly observed in the Seminary down to the present time.*

After the reception of this favour, the servant of God paid a visit

* M. Faillon says that the custom of reciting the Rosary every day for a quarter of an hour was already established at St. Sulpice when M. Olier received this intimation, but that he added to the recitation a quarter of an hour's meditation on the glories of Mary.

of thanksgiving to the church of Notre Dame at Paris; and, in further token of his gratitude, he repaired also to the shrine of Notre Dame de Liesse, where, as he knelt in prayer before her miraculous image, the Mother of Mercies did not fail to confer fresh favours upon her devoted client, and to assure him, with a certain ineffable authority and majesty, that all the devices of his adversaries should be brought to nought. Before going thither he had sought an audience of the Duke of Orleans, and we learn from his *Mémoires* that, although he couched what he said to him in most respectful terms, he was enabled to speak with a spirit and a power which made the proud man tremble. The result was that, although the friends of the Oratory took advantage of M. Olier's absence from Paris to renew their solicitations, the Regent stood firm in her determination and, at the instance of the Abbé de St. Germain, the Parliament issued a decree forbidding the proposed establishment within the parish of St. Sulpice.

CHAPTER V.

OBJECT OF THE COMMUNITY OF ST. SULPICE. EPISCOPAL AND PAPAL APPROBATION.

THE Venerable Mère Agnès de Jésus, it will be remembered, assured M. Olier, when he saw her at Langeac, that he was destined to lay the first foundations of ecclesiastical seminaries in France. In pursuance of this design, God was pleased to inspire the Episcopal body with such a singular esteem for his virtues and such an implicit confidence in his judgment that as early as 1643, when he was only in his thirty-fifth year, several of the most zealous and distinguished prelates consulted him (as we have seen) on the subject of erecting seminaries in their dioceses. But for the first few years the reform of his parish required the presence of so many of his priests that he was unable to do more than train for the work such clergy as were sent to him by the Bishops. After a time, however, he was in a condition to render more efficient aid, by commissioning members of his Community to take the direction of a seminary until the newly trained ecclesiastics were capable of conducting it without assistance. The next step was to charge the Society itself with the conduct of provincial seminaries; and here it is well to draw attention to a matter which had an important bearing on the fortunes of the institute and conduced most powerfully to its permanent success.

The Seminary of St. Sulpice was never formally erected into a *Congregation;* in the sense of a society consisting of several communities the members of which observe the same rules and are all subject to one and the same superior. True, it speedily began to assume that character, but it was not so constituted in its origin and, in fact, has never taken the name.* Had the founder given

* In the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de la Théologie Catholique* the Community of St. Sulpice is erroneously designated as a *Congregation.* The author of the article either wrote it before M. Faillon had published his biography or was

his institute that character at its commencement or announced it as included in his ultimate designs, so far from being cordially welcomed as an auxiliary by the Bishops, it would only have excited their distrust on account of the embarrassments and failures that had occurred wherever the experiment had hitherto been tried.* The Seminary, being created for the clergy, was to have no existence apart from the clerical body; to use the founder's own forcible expression, it was to be wholly fused and merged (*mêlé et perdu*) therein. "*Nec aliter vivit,*" he said, "*nisi vitâ cleri.*" For this reason he gave it no distinctive appellation; the name it bore from the first being bestowed upon it by popular consent, because it was situated in the parish of St. Sulpice and was connected with its church. Neither would he let his ecclesiastics be called Fathers, as were the members of other secular communities; as, for example, that of the Oratory. Belonging wholly to the clergy and identified with them, he would have nothing which should distinguish his society from that body, in its spirit, its practices, or its garb.

In every step he took M. Olier was guided by a holy prudence, or, rather it may be said, he faithfully followed the lights which from time to time were shed upon his path. This is the account which he has himself given of the course he was led to pursue. "On the morrow of St. Peter's day," he writes, "as I was invoking this great saint, he was pleased to say to me, answering the painful doubts with which my mind was troubled respecting the conduct of the Seminary, 'I will give thee my spirit for ordering everything;' and during Mass the Goodness of God made known to me what His purpose was regarding this house: that He desired it to be an Apostolic house, that is to say, a house established on the model of the College of the Apostles, who were not confined to the particular place to which the Son of God sent them to labour; accordingly, that it was God's will that there should be persons here whom I could send to aid the Bishops in founding and maintaining seminaries in their dioceses; who should train and form subjects in such places, and then leave them to manage their own houses; who

unacquainted with the work, to which he makes no allusion. He is also mistaken in assigning to M. Olier the Christian name of Jean-Baptiste instead of Jean-Jacques.

* M. Faillon, in one of those valuable historical sketches which are to be found in the notes to his work, gives a detailed account of these experiments and their failure.

should either return or be despatched elsewhere, being thus without settled habitations and having no pretension to erect establishments connected with each other and claiming to be a body corporate."

These intimations of the Divine will, it may be observed, were in exact accordance with the principles which P. de Condren had taught his disciple. "That holy personage," writes M. Olier, "whom I revered so much, and who promised me that I should be one of the heirs of his spirit after he had fulfilled his course and gone to Heaven, will finish his own work through us. He fully comprehends the sublime idea of the design which God revealed to him, and it is he who provides the materials for this work by disclosing to us gradually and little by little what he knows to be useful for us to learn; that we may labour according to that design and on the plan which God Himself traced out for him. But all this is effected by slow degrees."

M. Olier, however, was not the man to proceed by the light of private revelations alone; he knew well that what had been thus manifested to him—albeit the project had received the approval of individual bishops—must be formally sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority. Accordingly, in the year 1651, he took advantage of the General Assembly of the Clergy being held in Paris to submit to the collective Episcopate the entire plan and constitution of the Society, together with the laws by which it was governed. At the same time he addressed to them a letter, wherein, in the most unconditional manner, he surrendered the whole conduct of the Seminary into their hands, as being the persons who alone were capable of judging whether in its professed design and interior spirit it was in strict accordance with the true ecclesiastical idea. "The house," he said, "was called into being simply for your service, and it will go on as it has begun if it merits your approval. If not, it is ready to change everything, being convinced that it has no better security than in deference to your holy counsels." He at the same time laid before the Assembly the regulations and principles of conduct which his ecclesiastics had hitherto observed, with a view of obtaining the benefit of their united counsels as well as their authoritative approval. The following brief summary will give some idea of its purport :—

"As every religious Order has its particular spirit, which is copiously diffused among its novices, so the magnificent Order of the holy clergy, which alone is formally commissioned to render to God

all the duties, exterior and interior, of the religion of Jesus Christ, has in itself the universal spirit of the religion of that Sovereign Pontiff, who lets fall the seeds of His life abundantly in the sacred houses of the seminaries, in order to form therein the ministers of the Church. Hence we may learn the reason of that abiding grace and that abundance of spirit and light which God pours down upon them : religious Orders may lose the spirit of their institute and may perish, but the clerical Order cannot perish, for it is necessary to the very existence of the Church.

"The true and only superior of the seminary is the Bishop, who, containing in himself the plenitude of the spirit and the grace which is to be diffused among his clergy, can alone communicate to it its spirit and its life. What the head is in the natural body, the holy prelate must be in the mystical body of his clergy ; and it is but to labour in vain to attempt any other mode of sanctifying clerical colleges. However exalted may be the sanctity of those distinguished persons, eminent for their virtues, who are to be found scattered here and there throughout a diocese, inasmuch as they do not possess that capital grace which belongs to the divine character of prelates, we cannot expect in them that plenitude of spirit and life which is capable of replenishing and vivifying the body of the clergy.

"Seeing, however, that Bishops have not the leisure to attend personally to the direction and instruction of their clergy, it is necessary that they should have under their control priests whom they can set in their place to conduct their seminaries, and to whom they can communicate of their spirit and grace, as did Moses of old to the seventy ancients. They thus satisfy the most important obligation of the Episcopate, which is to sow the seed of divine life in the hearts of their principal subjects, who, in their turn, may fill cathedral chapters with their religion, altars with their sanctity, pulpits with their doctrine and piety, sacred tribunals with their justice, and the hearts of the people with the holy fire of their love. Herein principally consists the pre-eminent function of the hierarchical dignity in the communication of the spirit and the life of God. Oh, how admirable is the mission of good priests who have a share in this spirit, that they may distribute it among the noblest ministries of Jesus Christ and the holiest portions of His Church! They ought to be as reservoirs, deep and vast, to receive the abundance of grace necessary for an office so sacred. They ought to be by

their virtue what a holy prelate is by the dignity of his character, that, filled with his light, his spirit, and his grace, they may distribute it among all the members of the clergy, dividing to each according to his needs. A human exterior they must have, but in their heart of hearts they ought to be wholly divine; and their life must be human only that they may diffuse the life of God among men. They ought to have the interior of a bishop under the exterior of an ordinary life, endeavouring to transform the pupils of the sanctuary into themselves, even as they have been themselves transformed into the interior of their holy prelate.

"When the Son of God was preparing His Apostles and disciples for the spirit of their vocation He kept them three years near Himself, leading them continually to the annihilation of their own will and the stripping themselves of the gross things of this world. This very preparation it is which the Church of Christ, the depositary of His secrets, demands of all its priests, and especially of those whom the Bishops, the true successors of the Apostles, call to them to take the direction of their seminaries and to fill them with their spirit. These good priests, who in their ordinary life ought to be the models of their holy flock, must renew in themselves all that the Church has ever demanded of what is most pure and holy for the perfection of the priesthood; they must have immolated and annihilated their own will, being assured that the emptying themselves of self is the only disposition which will attract the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which cannot co-exist with their own individual spirit; and that, unless they give place entirely to this Divine Spirit, they will never afford Him the means of manifesting in them or in others the surpassing effects of Apostolic grace. I think, too, that they ought to renew in the presence of their bishop the renunciation they had already made of all worldly goods, when, on entering the clerical state, they took God for their portion and the riches of Heaven for their only possession. Seeing also of how much importance they are to a diocese, they ought to renounce all benefices, and not allow themselves to be withdrawn from an occupation which, as it is public and universal in its character, is likewise of wider influence and higher consideration than any other office whatever.

"As few are to be met with who are willing to enter on a life of self-denudation, and who at the same time are possessed of the necessary zeal, prudence, and capacity, pains must be taken to keep them when the goodness of God has provided them." They must

be relieved (he continues) of all exterior occupations; otherwise their attention to the work of the seminary will be in some degree relaxed, and its spiritual interests will proportionably suffer. They must be supplied with such food and clothing as is strictly necessary, but without having any personal concern in the matter. When death shall have removed any of the Directors, the survivors shall choose two or three priests most eminent for knowledge and virtue, whom they shall present to the Bishop for his selection.

Besides the Directors, there ought to be in every seminary a number of priests thoroughly formed, and ready to go at a moment's notice into any part of the diocese to which the Bishop may please to send them. These need not, like the first, make renunciation of ecclesiastical benefices or dignities, inasmuch as they ought to hold themselves at the disposal of their prelate, to be employed in such way as shall seem to him good.

The third class, which is far the most numerous, will consist of the seminarists, properly so called. As they are of every rank and condition, care must be taken to observe such simplicity in the matter of food and clothing that, on the one hand, the poor may not be over-provided for and, on the other, the rich may not be too hardly treated. Most important of all is the practice of self-mortification, without which there is nothing solid in the religion of the clergy or in the perfection of the priesthood, any more than in Christianity itself. The great object, therefore, of the Directors of a seminary must be to ground their subjects well in the mortification of all the natural appetites. Jesus Christ our Lord gave the first death-blow to the life of sin by the life of baptism, leaving us to continue what He had begun, that is to say, continually to cut away the germs of sin, which, though dead in itself, is not so in its consequences. The Son of God contented Himself with slaying the parent with His own hand, reserving to us the strangling of the offspring. This it is on which the seminarists must be frequently exhorted; they must be taught to keep their eyes ever open to the malice of their desires, in order to mortify them and keep them buried in spiritual death, as their profession demands and their very habit testifies; they must be aided in maintaining a perfect detestation of this life and a continual longing for the life to come, which is the object and the end of all the holy exercises of the seminary."

The second part of the Memorial, of which M. Olier left only a rough draft, treats of these exercises; and first of the interior exer-

cises: silence, examens, spiritual reading, and, above all, prayer and the practice of the virtues. "As the seminary," he said, "is the seed-plot, in our Lord, of the ecclesiastical spirit, the first and principal care of the Directors, who ought themselves to be men of prayer, must be to make their subjects, as far as possible, interior men, by showing them the importance of doing all things in union with the Spirit of our Lord, without which neither Christian works nor ecclesiastical functions can be pleasing to God or produce any fruit in the heart of the Church. And of what profit will be all the Sacrifices and Offices, the ceremonies and the chant, and everything else which we take so much trouble to teach, and rightly so, in the seminary, if the spirit and the life do not animate it all? On the interior life depend the blessing of our labours and the sanctity of our works." The exterior exercises M. Olier commences with a beautiful instruction on the ceremonies of the Church; and his biographer laments that so valuable a treatise should exist only in an incomplete and fragmentary form.

On March 13th, 1651, one of the priests of St. Sulpice was introduced into the Assembly by the Bishop of Vabres and presented a copy of the Memorial* to each of the prelates as well as of the deputies of the second order,—a copy being also sent to such of the Bishops as were absent,—when their Lordships, not content with simply approving the rules of the Society, cordially accepted its proffered services in behalf of themselves and their clergy, and bestowed upon it the name of the "Company of the Priests of the Clergy of France." This, it may be observed by the way, is the reason why M. Olier, M. de Lantages, M. Tronson, and others styled themselves "Priests of the Clergy" in their published works; but the popular designation is that by which the Seminary has continued to be known. In the next General Assembly of the

* The Memorial was entitled "*Projet de l'Établissement d'un Séminaire dans un Diocèse.* This document, though printed for the use of the Bishops, was never published; and the only copy known to be extant is preserved, in manuscript, at the Seminary of St. Sulpice; but even this is said by M. Faillon to be incomplete. Such as it is, he gives it at length at the end of his third volume; and it is hardly too much to say that its perusal is necessary to any one who would desire thoroughly to understand the spirit of the institute and the designs of its holy founder. It is far too long for insertion here, and no abridgment would do justice to its beauty and profundity, or to its fulness of practical detail; but, should the present work be well received, the writer would gladly make a translation of the document and publish it as an Appendix to the Life in a subsequent edition.

Clergy, which took place in 1655, the subject was discussed on several occasions, and effectual means were adopted in concert by the Bishops for the establishment and permanent maintenance of ecclesiastical seminaries throughout the realm.

We have said that, for prudential reasons, as well as on account of the intrinsic character of the institute, M. Olier was averse to the Seminary being formally erected into a Congregation; nevertheless he did not refuse, as has already appeared, to establish seminaries in the provinces when he was urged by any Bishop to do so and had priests at his disposal who were competent for the undertaking. But, although these priests were still dependent upon him as their superior, and thus to ordinary observers the Company might present the appearance of a Congregation, there was this essential difference, —that the Bishop could dismiss them when he pleased and substitute other Directors in their stead. "Should any one ask you," wrote M. Tronson to M. Leschassier, "if we are constituted as a Congregation, you will answer in the negative, but that we are content to provide subjects for those of my Lords the Bishops who ask them of us for the direction of their seminaries during as long a time as they may judge proper." When, therefore, the priests of the Society, at the call of any Bishop, went to assist him in establishing and conducting his seminary, they remained as long as their services were required and no longer; and even when, at the express desire of any Bishop, they remained to conduct and administer the seminary they had founded, they claimed no right of possession beyond such term as was assigned them, but held themselves in readiness to surrender the houses they occupied to other labourers whenever they received the word to depart. In Paris alone, and in their own seminary of St. Sulpice, had they either permanent habitation or corporate existence. With what fidelity M. Olier adhered to these principles and conditions will appear in the course of the narrative.

The Memorial which the Episcopate had so unanimously approved gave a powerful impulse to the erection of diocesan seminaries in France; and even those among the Bishops who did not secure the services of M. Olier's priests adopted in great measure the usages and rules of his house. This was the case in the dioceses of Limoges and Aix, as well as in that of Nantes, where the priests of St. Sulpice were for a time replaced by ecclesiastics of the locality. This, indeed, was the case even with Bishops of other countries. Thus, in 1663, M. d'Aranthon d'Alex, Bishop of Geneva, who had beheld the good

effects which were produced at St. Sulpice, on establishing a seminary at Annecy,—a thing which his predecessors ever since St. Francis de Sales had failed of accomplishing,—applied to M. Tronson for the rules of the institute, although he entrusted the government of his house to the Priests of St. Lazare. But, besides the Bishops, many zealous members of the second order became the founders of seminaries—always, of course, with the sanction of their prelates—and, to secure their permanence and success, modelled them in all respects after the pattern of St. Sulpice. This was true of the seminary which M. Joly, Canon of St. Etienne de Dijon, erected in that town; and the same may be said of the seminary of the Trente-Trois, which was commenced at Paris by M. Bernard, the "Poor Priest;" of that of St. Charles instituted at Lyons by M. Démia; and, it may be added, of all those which were founded by M. de Chansiergues, who, from a motive of humility, never proceeded beyond the diaconate.

A few words may here be devoted to this remarkable man. In early manhood he resigned a prebendal stall which he held in the cathedral church of Uzés and came to Paris for the purpose of assisting young and necessitous clerics, although he possessed no private means. Having heard of the zealous labours of M. Olier and his Community, he desired to lodge near the Seminary in order to imbibe something of its spirit, and to follow its practices so far as he was capable. To this end he joined an association of six poor students who lived on alms and on such pittance as they derived from transcribing theological treatises. This association had been formed by M. René Lévêque, of whom we shall have to speak hereafter, and its members went by the name of the Brothers of Abstinence on account of their extreme poverty. At the time M. de Chansiergues came to Paris, they had at their head a priest who resided in the parish, and who, at his death, which took place two years afterwards, was succeeded by that holy man himself. Through his unwearied exertions the association assumed much wider proportions; it took up its residence in a house which M. de Farainvilliers, a generous parishioner, bestowed on the brethren in the Rue du Pot de Fer, where it developed at length into the Seminary of St. Louis, and was instrumental in founding no less than thirty-eight Petits Séminaires in the kingdom, as well as twelve similar associations of poor scholars in Paris alone. His humility was equal to his zeal, for, in a spirit of humility, he always referred the success with

which his labours were attended to the prayers of pious persons interested in the work, especially of M. Bauin, one of the Directors of the Seminary, whom he never failed to consult in everything he undertook.

As his efforts prospered he redoubled his austerities; and, in order to live a more retired and mortified life, he took up his abode in a sort of turret, to which the only access was by a ladder. Its furniture consisted of two planks, which, with a miserable coverlet, formed his couch, a table to write on, a crucifix, an image of the Blessed Virgin, and a little picture representing the death of St. Francis Xavier. He allowed himself only two hours of repose; the rest of the night was spent in prayer, in answering letters, or drawing up petitions for poor seminarists. He denied himself a fire even in the depth of winter, and, though frequently drenched with rain, he never changed his clothes. Severe, however, as he was to himself, he was ever careful of the health and well-being of his dear clerics. By day he went about begging alms for their support, heedless of the rebuffs and cruel taunts which he encountered, even from those who at first had been among his most liberal benefactors; indeed he would say, in his humble way, that the alms were for his communities, the rebuffs were for himself. His poor scholars cost him, as he declared, no more than three sous each a day, but the number was so large that the sum to be collected must have been considerable. Being of a jocose and lively disposition, he invented numerous dignities and offices which he affected to sell to Bishops and Abbots with a view of raising money for his associates. Thus, one was made general of the Order, as he called it; another superior; a third, visitor; a fourth, assistant. Louis XIV., learning with astonishment on how small a sum a man was able to support himself in the heart of Paris, became a benefactor to the institute, and his example was followed by several persons about the Court. This heroic lover of poverty died in the Lent of 1691, at the age of fifty-five.

But to return. M. Olier further prepared the way for the foundation of seminaries in the provinces by the zeal and fervour with which he inspired his disciples, and which they, in their turn, communicated to the clergy of the dioceses to which they belonged. Thus, the author of a Life of M. Bourdoise relates that in the year 1650 the Jesuit directors of the College of La Flèche, impressed with the necessity of supplying the Church with good priests, sent M. Ignace de la Dauversière de Champy to St. Sulpice that, after drinking at

that fount of ecclesiastical discipline, he might return and communicate of the same to his brethren in Anjou. And so largely did he profit by its invigorating virtues that, when he became Curé of Bazouges, he established in his own house a community of pious priests which formed the nucleus of a future seminary, for at that time there was none in the diocese of Angers. In 1694 it was, by the desire of the Bishop, incorporated with the Seminary of St. Sulpice. M. d'Entrechaux did something of the same kind at Avignon, which was similarly circumstanced. His biographer describes him as one of those fervent disciples whom M. Olier had implored of God to aid him in the work to which He had called him. While he was at St. Sulpice he made a summary of all the spiritual conferences at which he had been present; and certain simple methods which the seminarists were taught in order to assist them in the practice of prayer were so highly valued by him that, on his return to Avignon, he recommended them to persons who aspired to perfection; of which he was regarded as a living model by the clergy of the diocese and especially by the Canons. His life presents many traits of resemblance to that of M. Olier, particularly in respect to mortification, the spirit of prayer, zeal for souls, and devotion to the Blessed Mother of God. He died the death of a saint in 1706.

The movement which M. Olier inaugurated had other and most important consequences. In spite of the prejudices which past experiences had fostered, the Bishops at length came to see that only societies entirely devoted to the one object of educating the clergy could furnish a seminary with efficient Directors or secure its permanent existence. The education of the clergy, in fact, demanded, not only a more than ordinary zeal, capacity, and prudence on the part of their instructors, but an absolute disinterestedness in regard to this world's goods, and a resolute denudation of self, without which, to use M. Olier's own words, "the Spirit of Jesus Christ will never produce the precious fruits of Apostolic grace" either in the Directors themselves or in those whom they are set to instruct and to form. It demanded, he considered, a continual and exclusive application to the work altogether incompatible with other occupations, however excellent in themselves.

Nor was M. Olier singular in this conviction. M. Bourdoise, writing to an ecclesiastic whom he deemed specially qualified for the office of director, said, in that emphatic style which was characteristic

of the man, "Please God, you may never show yourself in a pulpit either to preach or to catechise, however much you may be wanted; please God, you may never set foot in a confessional, when you ought to be entirely employed in forming good priests!" And experience gave additional cogency to this advice; for, as M. Emery strongly expressed it, the seminary whose conductors were engaged in exterior occupations never lasted to the third generation without losing its savour. For example, in 1643 M. Henri de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, instituted a society to be devoted both to the education of the clergy and to missionary labours in his diocese, and nominated a zealous priest, M. Jean de Fonteneil, as its director. This society for a while appeared to answer fully to the twofold object for which it was created; so much so, indeed, that, in 1649, his successor in the see, Henri de Béthune, gave it the highest proof of his approbation by making it the seminary of his diocese. In the following year it was confirmed by royal patent, and, finally, in 1668 it undertook the direction of the seminary of Sarlat in addition to that of Bordeaux. But the sequel did not correspond with the promising beginnings; for M. du Bourlemont, who succeeded M. de Béthune, found himself under the necessity of closing the seminary owing to the default of persons capable of maintaining it; and its suppression involved that of Sarlat also.

The Bishops, in short, became convinced by personal experience that the direction of a seminary required or, rather it may be said, implied a special and divine vocation; and that a Community or Congregation devoted solely to the work and consisting of faithful men tried and proved by a life of retirement, regularity, and subordination would be better qualified, even though its members were endowed with fewer general talents, to foster the true ecclesiastical spirit and perpetuate the primitive traditions of a house than would a body of ecclesiastics chosen from among the clergy of the diocese; for whom, moreover, they might not always find competent successors. The result was that they were fain to confide their seminaries to the care of some Congregation, especially that of St. Lazare, which, after the death of its holy founder, accepted the charge of many such houses.*

* The Priests of St. Lazare were employed both in giving country missions and in training candidates for holy orders, but the latter office was kept distinct from the former; just as at St. Sulpice the members of the Community who were charged with parochial ministrations took no part in the proper work of the Seminary.

It was to this Congregation that the Archbishop of Bordeaux, in 1682, entrusted the direction of the society which his predecessors had established, and his example was followed by the Bishop of Sarlat. The Bishop of St. Paul de Léon had already done the same; and, in the course of a few years, a great number of seminaries which had previously been managed by priests of the several dioceses were handed over to the members of Congregations; principally, as has been said, to the Priests of St. Lazare, but some also to the Eudists and others. From 1684 to 1762 the Jesuit Fathers undertook the direction of several seminaries.

Thus were accomplished the designs of God in regard to the communities which He had called into being for the sanctification of the ecclesiastical order; and this happy consummation may with truth be attributed, in large measure, to the courageous zeal, attempered by a sagacious prudence, with which, under the guidance of Divine Wisdom and aided by the subtle influences of a holy life, the founder of St. Sulpice at once aroused the energies and disarmed the prejùdices of the Episcopate of France.

Many seminaries, as we are about to see, were founded or governed by the priests of St. Sulpice during the life of M. Olier, and many also after he had gone to his rest, but, taken in the aggregate, they may be said to have been comparatively few. His first successors on several occasions refused the applications made to them by Bishops, and referred them to the priests of St. Lazare. M. Emery reckoned up no less than a hundred and thirty such applications during the period of a century and a half; and he himself, as well as the Superior who succeeded him, refused in like manner a considerable number. Nor does this argue any shrinking from responsibility on the part of M. Olier and his followers, or any failure of God's promises; it does but show the fidelity with which the founder of St. Sulpice and his successors adhered to their vocation. M. Olier was raised up by God, not to govern and direct the ecclesiastical seminaries of France, but, in the words of the Mère Agnès, *to lay their first foundations.* In the intention of P. de Condren, as M. Olier himself relates, the community which that holy man had projected was designed to stimulate the zeal of the Congregations, and of the clergy generally, in the momentous matter of clerical education. This emphatically was their mission; and to fulfil it effectually they were bound to abstain from multiplying the number of their subjects and of their houses. The counsels

which M. Olier gave to those who were to carry on the work which he had begun are so express on this point that it will be well to quote them at length; and they deserve to be quoted, if only for the sake of the exalted sentiments they breathe.

"Let this house," he wrote, "beware of yielding to the temptation, which is so common, of swelling itself out in emulation of other societies in the Church of God, and glorying in the multitude of subjects whom it can despatch whithersoever it pleases. Safer far that in the Church, where there are many mansions, they should be established by the hand of God, the true Father of the family. More profitable far to have visible agents, invisibly associated with them, who over the whole earth and throughout the Universal Church may render glory to God, who provides servants for Himself in His own way and watches over and maintains His own society thus everywhere diffused: '*As the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are His ways exalted above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts.*'* Let this house bear in mind, and never forget, those words of Holy Scripture: '*It is easy for the Lord to save either by many or by few;*' † whence we see how Jesus Christ founded His Church and maintained it by a little band of Apostles and disciples. Let it know for certain that oftentimes the nation is multiplied, and its joy is not increased;‡ that it is the many whose charity grows cold;§ that perfection is the portion of the few; and that God rejoices more in one heart of perfect charity than over ninety-nine, or a thousand, tepid hearts.‖ In fine, let this house know that hitherto, '*like choice myrrh*,' which is always rare, it has '*given forth a sweet scent*' and, like '*a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense*,' and of all manner of perfumes, has, by the direction of God, '*yielded a sweet odour.*'¶ All which teaches us to abide firmly and constantly in the ways of God regarding us."

Such were the motives by which the man of God was actuated and in harmony with which his disciples have ever since proceeded. They serve to explain and vindicate their uniform conduct in not endeavouring to extend their society or to annex fresh establishments to the Seminary. "We are at no trouble to multiply ourselves," wrote M. Tronson; "we do so only when we see clearly that God requires it of us and His Providence gives

* Isaias lv. 9.
† 1 Kings xiv. 6.
‡ Isaias ix. 3.
§ St. Matthew xxiv. 12.
‖ Comp. Ib. xviii. 13.
¶ Ecclus. xxiv. 20. Cant. iii. 6.

evident signs of His will." Hence also the little pains they took to secure to themselves the permanent direction of the houses which at the call of the Bishops they had commenced. Thus the priests of the Society laboured for many years at Autun without seeking to have its Seminary united to that of St. Sulpice; and when M. Tronson, who, after many and renewed applications on the part of the Archbishop of Bourges, had at last consented to undertake the establishment of his diocesan seminary, was urged to obtain from that prelate some sort of guarantee that it should belong in perpetuity to the Community of St. Sulpice, he made the following reply: "So long as we regard Monseigneur the Archbishop as holding to us the place of our Lord, who dismisses His labourers when He pleases, we shall remain perfectly contented whatever he may ordain; whether the term of our service be that of his natural life, or he be pleased to extend it to his successors, he is the master, and we have never had an idea of thwarting him. Should he dismiss us at once, we should have no ground of complaint; on the contrary, we should ever feel ourselves obliged to him for having summoned us to his aid. For it is an honour he has done us, and one much greater than we deserved, in employing us to commence a work so conducive to the glory of God. This is our veritable state of mind, and you know it was always M. Olier's view and the spirit of the house, which never seeks to multiply itself but to serve my Lords the Bishops so far as they desire."

Shortly after the Episcopate of France had accorded its formal sanction to the Seminary of St. Sulpice, several Bishops of other countries begged M. Olier to send them priests to aid in the erection of seminaries as well as in the general reformation of their clergy. Hitherto he had contented himself with the episcopal approbation, inasmuch as the establishment of diocesan seminaries was already sufficiently authorized by the Church,* but now that he was requested to extend the operations of his institute beyond the confines of the realm he felt that, before making any reply to the applications he had received, he ought to obtain the express approbation of the Holy See. In this he was encouraged by the King, who on August 23rd, 1652, directed his ambassador, M. de Valançai, to support the petition for the confirmation of the Seminary with all his influence, and at the same time addressed a letter of like import

* It was solely on this ground that P. Eudes was refused a special approbation by the Holy See.

to the Cardinal d'Est, Protector at Rome of the Gallican Church. M. Olier also himself indited a letter, a copy of which is preserved at the Seminary, to the Sovereign Pontiff, Innocent X.; which, however, was never despatched, for the servant of God was withheld from pursuing the matter further by the consideration of the great and urgent demand there was for such auxiliaries in the kingdom itself; and the object he sought was not attained until after the foundation of the Seminary of Ville Marie at Montréal in Canada, when, in 1664, seven years after his death, the Seminary of St. Sulpice was, on the petition of the then Superior, M. de Bretonvilliers, approved and confirmed by letters patent from Cardinal Chigi, Legate *à latere* of Alexander VII. to France.

Thus was fulfilled—and the terms of the Apostolic brief are express on the point—the prediction of M. Olier to which he gave utterance while at Vaugirard, that the Seminary of St. Sulpice should be open to all the provinces of France and devoted to the service of the Universal Church.* Nor must mention be omitted of the remarkable testimony borne to the mission of M. Olier by the General Assembly of the Clergy when in 1725, and again in 1730, they solicited from Popes Benedict XIII. and Clement XII. the canonization of the Mère Agnès de Jésus. "We desire," they said, "with the more earnestness the public veneration of this holy virgin, inasmuch as, if we may so express ourselves, she brought forth in the Lord that excellent priest, Jean-Jacques Olier, the glory and ornament of our clergy, and, by leading him to a more perfect life, conferred incalculable benefits upon the Church. For, to say no more, what abundant fruits are not every day reaped from the foundation of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, which owes its existence to this most pious priest! From this seminary, as from a fortress of religion and a school of all virtues, goes forth a countless multitude of prelates and ecclesiastics of all ranks, powerful in word and example, strong in faith, *rooted and founded in charity, and furnished to every good work.*" †

* At the present time, as appears from a statement in the *Life of M. Courson* (n. pp. 445, 446), twelfth Superior of St. Sulpice, not less than twenty provincial seminaries in France are administered by the Community; to which may be added the Seminary of Montreal in Canada and those of Baltimore and Boston in the United States; the last having been erected in September, 1884. All these seminaries are under the supreme government of the Superior General, who resides at St. Sulpice, but visits each house from time to time and appoints their several superiors and directors. With him are associated twelve ecclesiastics of age and experience, called Assistants.

† Eph. iii. 17. 2 Tim. iii. 17. See Additional Notes, No. 5.

CHAPTER VI.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PROVINCIAL SEMINARIES.

NO categorical account has been left by M. Olier of the seminaries which he helped to found in the provinces of France. Of some, accordingly, no memorials exist; but of others many interesting particulars may be gathered from letters which have been preserved and from incidental notices committed to writing at the time.

Among the earliest seminaries which owed their origin to him may be reckoned that of Villefranche-en-Rouergue in the diocese of Rodez, which was then of large extent. Being solicited by the Bishop, M. de Noailles, on his taking possession of his see, to send some of his priests to assist him in shepherding his flock, which for twenty years had been well-nigh abandoned, although he could ill afford to part with any, engaged as they were in the reform of the Faubourg, he nevertheless despatched to his aid the two men whom he deemed most fitted for so difficult a task: M. du Ferrier, who was a native of Toulouse and favourably regarded in Languedoc, and M. de Queylus, born in Rouergue itself, where he held the abbey of Loc-Dieu and where his family had long resided and were highly esteemed. This he did, however, with the express understanding that he should be at liberty to recall them whenever they had effected the immediate object for which they were sent, trusting that they would leave behind them zealous ecclesiastics who would continue the work they had begun. In 1637 he had made the acquaintance at Paris of M. Raymond Bonal, who by birth was connected with the diocese and who, with P. de Condren's approval, had formed an association, in conjunction with M. Meyster, which was to be devoted to the sanctification of the clerical order as well as to missionary labours among the population. But after ten years of unwearied exertion, not only at Rodez but also at Pamiers and Aleth, they had not succeeded in having their associa-

tion recognised as an ecclesiastical community, owing to the prejudices entertained by the Bishops against the employment of Congregations. But M. Olier hoped that by means of the priests whom he was sending these obstacles might be surmounted; and this was actually the case.

In order to give M. du Ferrier greater facilities for accomplishing the work he had undertaken, M. de Noailles conferred upon him the office of grand-vicar, and through his influence the Chapter of Villefranche was induced to give up to M. Bonal's community the church of Notre Dame de Pitié, or des Treize Pierres, as it was called, with a house adjoining; and here, on February 21st, 1648, was erected what was officially designated a "Community and Seminary for the instruction of Clerics and Curés." The Bishop was intending to establish a seminary at Rodez itself in the Easter of the same year, and had selected a house for the purpose, but he died suddenly at the end of Lent, and it was not until the year 1677 that his design was actually carried into effect by his third successor, M. Levoyer de Paulmy. This prelate chose for its first superior M. Thomas Regnoust, a doctor of the Sorbonne, who, although not a member of the Society, had passed nearly two years at the Seminary under M. Olier's direction, and thus was thoroughly replenished with the spirit and maxims of the house. Under the government of this most able and accomplished man, assisted by ecclesiastics of the diocese, the Seminary continued till the year 1695, when it was confided to the Jesuit Fathers, and after the suppression of their holy Company was united to the Congregation of St. Lazare.

During the short period that M. de Noailles governed his diocese M. Olier's priests had succeeded in working a marvellous change, as the servant of God had himself occasion to observe when passing through Rodez and Villefranche in the autumn of 1647. In addition to the ten days' exercises, which were observed for the first time in preparation for the December ordination in that same year, they had established the practice, ever since continued, of monthly conferences, held in different parts of the diocese, at which each ecclesiastic gave written answers to twelve questions in dogma and morals. The clergy readily conformed to the canons of the Church in all that regarded their life and conversation, and their general conduct underwent so marked and rapid a transformation that in the following year M. Olier was able to withdraw his priests. Nor

did they relax in their earnestness when their instructors had departed. Many, of their own accord, would go and make a stay of some weeks at the seminary, in order to renew their fervour and perfect themselves in the duties and virtues of their state; and this although during the first years of its establishment the lodging, the fare, and the general accommodation were of the barest, scantiest kind. M. de Queylus subsequently returned to Villefranche and, partly from a motive of mortification, partly for the purpose of raising the institution in the estimation of the clergy, took up his abode in the seminary. There, later, he was able to determine, to the advantage of the community, a dispute that had arisen between them and the Chapter respecting the terms on which the house had been ceded to them. He also bestowed upon them a farm which he possessed at Loc-Dieu, in order to provide them with corn, wood, and other necessaries. At his instance, M. de Pèrèfixe, who succeeded M. de Noailles, confirmed that prelate's approbation of the community on June 14th, 1651, and, shortly after, the King granted to it his letters patent. In fine, the Canons of the collegiate and parochial church of Villefranche emulated the zeal of M. de Queylus by contributing liberally to the erection of a commodious house for the joint use of the seminary and of M. Bonal's community. This association continued until the year 1723, when the Seminary of Villefranche, like that of Rodez, was united to the Congregation of St. Lazare.

On his return from Rodez to Paris M. Olier visited Limoges, with the object (as already related) of venerating the relics of St. Martial, Apostle of Aquitaine. The state in which he found the diocese filled his soul with anguish. Many of the gentry, by a fictitious presentation, had made over the parishes of which they were patrons to Vicaires, who were removable at their pleasure, and bestowed the revenues on their own children. Such was the ignorance of the clergy, and their utter disregard of the essential duties of their office, that one of themselves, writing to M. Bourdoise, declared that all that was required in order to be reputed a good ecclesiastic, was "to be able to read, and not to be guilty of any heinous crime." Another thus expressed himself: "If you knew but a hundredth part of what goes on in country churches, you would weep tears of blood." In his grief and desolation the man of God, after saying Mass at the tomb of the Saint, remained for five hours in prayer, bathed in tears and beseeching the Father

of Mercies to have pity on the poor neglected people. God was not deaf to His servant's call, for, as he prayed, he received a secret intimation that he should himself be the instrument of the grace which he implored; that the day was not far distant when the diocese should possess its seminary, conducted by his own community, and for its chief pastor one of his own spiritual children. All which was literally verified; for, five years after the death of the holy man, M. Jean Bourdon, a doctor of the Sorbonne, who, though not a Sulpician, had enjoyed the advantage of being trained by M. Olier himself, was, on the recommendation of M. de Bretonvilliers, selected by M. de Lafayette, the Bishop, to organize and govern the Seminary of Limoges. He summoned to his aid his brother Michel, Curé of Havre and also a doctor of the Sorbonne, who, like himself, had been a disciple of M. Olier, and whom he placed at the head of an association of priests who were to be employed in giving missions and supplying the general necessities of the diocese. With the sanction of the Bishop the seminary was modelled in all things after the pattern of St. Sulpice, and so abundant were the graces which God showered down upon it that, in the hope of securing their continuance, M. de Lafayette, at the instance of M. Bourdon, desired to have the Seminary of Limoges incorporated with that of St. Sulpice. This accordingly was done in the year 1666, and M. Bourdon himself was installed a member of the Community.

In further fulfilment of the divine promise, M. Lascaris d'Urfé, who was a child of the house and had a singular veneration for M. Olier, was made Bishop of Limoges. He was the eldest son of a noble family, and had passed the early years of his life at the courts of Paris and of Savoy, where he was known as the Comte de Sommerive. On quitting the world he entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice. As Bishop of Limoges he was a model of piety, humility, and charity to the poor. In order to have the more to give in alms he took up his residence at the seminary, where he lived in all plainness and simplicity. In a time of great public distress he stripped himself of all he possessed, even pledging his episcopal ring. During the eighteen years which he spent in the seminary he never failed to be present at the morning prayers of the community; he said his office on his knees, and every day passed whole hours before the Blessed Sacrament. His affection for his priests is described as having in it something not only tender but reverential,

so great was his respect for their sacred character; and the feelings he entertained for them they in turn reciprocated. His talents, his address, his demeanour, the very modesty and majesty of his countenance, everything about him, inspired veneration. He seemed born to be a bishop and the reformer of his diocese. Such is the testimony rendered to him by the Abbé du Carrier, the biographer of M. Bourdoise. By the successive exertions of these two devoted prelates, aided by priests of St. Sulpice, an entire reformation was effected in the diocese.

When, in 1648, the year in which he withdrew his priests from Villefranche, M. Olier (as noticed at the time) went to pay his devotions at the tomb of St. Vincent Ferrer at Vannes, the particular grace for which he prayed was that of preaching with something of the energy and power for which that great Apostle of Brittany had been distinguished. But the Saint—who, it may be remarked, had himself predicted that the day would come when God would raise up Apostolic men whose mission it should be to exalt the sacerdotal order—by an interior communication gave him to understand that he would obtain for him a gift more in accordance with his vocation: that of training children for God who should perpetuate the work he had begun, and enlarge the kingdom of Christ; and to this end bade him establish a seminary at Nantes, and send some of his ecclesiastics to conduct it. The impression thus supernaturally conveyed received an immediate confirmation; for the Grand-Vicar of Vannes, as though regardless of the interests of his own diocese, strongly urged him, for the good of the province, to do the very thing which had been enjoined upon him by the Saint. Keeping silence, however, as to what had occurred, M. Olier returned to Paris to await a further manifestation of the Divine will. This was not long delayed. M. de Beauvau, the Bishop of Nantes, now himself begged the man of God to take the direction of the seminary which for six years he had been endeavouring to establish in his diocese. M. Olier, wishing to leave the matter entirely in the hands of Providence, suggested that application should first be made to the Oratorians, who had a house at Nantes and were in the habit of giving retreats to candidates for ordination; adding that his mission led him rather into desert places where labourers there were none. The Bishop, however, declaring that to the priests of St. Sulpice and to them alone would he intrust the undertaking, M. Olier yielded to his importunities,

and, in the summer of 1649, sent to Nantes two of his most experienced priests, M. de Queylus and M. d'Hurtevent, reserving, however, to himself the liberty of recalling them whenever their services were needed elsewhere.

With the approbation of M. de Beauvau they introduced into the new seminary all the practices which they had themselves followed at Vaugirard and Paris. In conformity also with P. de Condren's instructions they received only such candidates as had completed their classical and philosophical course; and, in order that strict enquiry might be instituted into the character and antecedents of all who presented themselves, the Bishop directed that they should announce their intention to the Directors three months before being received into the house. Hitherto the only preparation required for admission to holy orders had been a previous retreat of fifteen days with the Oratorians; but it was now enacted that for the future no one should be promoted to the subdiaconate until he had spent six months in the seminary and had given entire satisfaction to the Directors; the diaconate was not to be received until a year after, when an immediate preparation of eight days was prescribed; for the priesthood an additional year's probation was required, and, after ordination, every one was to remain six months in the seminary in order to be more perfectly exercised in the virtues which specially befit the sacerdotal state and office. Thus the entire preparation for the priesthood extended nearly over a space of three years.

By means of the salutary order and discipline thus established by the priests of St. Sulpice the garden of the Lord soon began to bear fruit a hundredfold. The candidates for holy orders were diligently instructed in chanting, preaching, and administering the sacraments, as well as in moral theology, the practice of mental prayer, and in other works of piety and devotion to the honour and glory of God; and many priests of the diocese, who sought to live according to the perfection of their state, came to make a retreat from time to time under the guidance of these accomplished masters of the spiritual life. But, as the needs of other dioceses were equally pressing, and the reform of his parish demanded the continual services of a numerous body of priests, M. Olier recalled M. de Queylus towards the close of the year and placed him at the head of the parochial clergy, while M. d'Hurtevent was made superior of the seminary at Nantes and received as his coadjutor M. Balthazar

Maillard de Paris, who was subsequently promoted to the same office when M. d'Hurtevent in his turn was recalled to St. Sulpice.

M. Olier had intended to withdraw his priests at an early opportunity, but, seeing the abundant fruits with which their labours were rewarded and the impossibility of finding ecclesiastics on the spot to whom the conduct of the seminary could be intrusted, he was content to leave them at Nantes, where, indeed, they remained for a period of twelve years,—a thing which the priests of St. Sulpice had never done before,—and in all probability they would have continued in perpetuity but for certain untoward circumstances which arose and which led to their departure for a season. Those circumstances, briefly stated, were as follows. The house which the Bishop had assigned to the seminary in the parish of St. Clément affording insufficient room for the numerous students and others who frequented it, and being otherwise ill adapted to its purpose, the Directors were desirous of erecting a larger and more suitable residence. But, a Grand Séminaire being at that time a novel institution, many worthy persons were averse to contributing towards its establishment, while the magistrates of Nantes were opposed to the project altogether under the apprehension that the community, once established, might become a burden to the town. So the affair dragged on for years, and nothing was done. But, what was most discouraging, the Bishop himself ceased to take an interest in the matter and, indeed, in the whole work of the seminary, which at first he had so earnestly promoted. For this abatement of zeal, however, there was a cause. After the death of M. Olier, in 1657, the disposition of M. de Beauvau towards the Sulpicians underwent a manifest change, owing to the baneful influence of one of his grand-vicars in whom he placed unbounded confidence. This man had regarded the reforms which had been effected in the diocese with no favourable eye, and was secretly working for the ruin of the seminary; in which at length he was so far successful that, in 1659, the Bishop issued an ordinance providing that for the future the establishment should be subject to the absolute control of the grand-vicars of Nantes. The order and regimen of the house were thus completely overthrown, and in the month of March, 1660, M. de Bretonvilliers wrote to the superior that, if M. de Beauvau, after humble representations made to him, should be willing to restore things to their former state, they might remain; if not, they must look on his refusal as a sign that it was the will of God that they should quit

the diocese. This accordingly happened; and M. le Bretonvilliers begged M. Maillard to make no complaints, whether in or outside the house, of the ill usage they had received, but to thank our Lord for giving them a share in His humiliations and deeming them worthy to suffer something for the glory of His name.

No sooner, however, had M. Gilles de la Baulme, nephew and successor of M. de Beauvau, taken possession of his see than he was anxious to re-establish the seminary on its former basis, so far, at least, as might be practicable. With this object he sent four of his ecclesiastics to St. Sulpice to be trained and formed under the direction of M. Olier's successors. Of these, M. Couperie de Jonchères, who before taking orders had been President of the Présidial (a court of judicature) at Nantes, was made superior of the house, and for more than forty years laboured, but unhappily without success, to maintain the sound principles which the community had originally professed. By an ordinance bearing date March 14th, 1673, M. Gilles de la Baulme incorporated the Seminary of Nantes with the Community of St. Clément, which M. René Lévêque had founded in that town, and which had for its object the preaching of missions, the training of young ecclesiastics, and the giving of spiritual exercises to all who desired to profit by them. Some passing allusion has already been made to this holy and devoted priest, as having instituted a sort of community in the parish of St. Sulpice for poor scholars whose straitened means prevented their proceeding to the priesthood, but here some further mention of him may be made. He belonged by birth to the diocese of Nantes, and had enjoyed the benefit of M. Olier's own direction when the noviciate was at Avron. Every other year, while at Nantes, he went to make a retreat at St. Sulpice. It was his custom to perform the journey on foot, but towards the close of his life, being no longer able to bear the fatigue, he took boat on the Loire. His provisions by the way consisted of a little bread and butter which he carried with him, the water of the river served him for drink, and for an occupation he used to twist girdles for albs, which he gave to poor priests. When far advanced in years and decrepit from infirmities, so far from relaxing, he redoubled his austerities. Gentle and compassionate to others, so unpitying was the war which he waged against himself that, having a painful festering ulcer in his leg, he would fain have paid no attention to it and was with difficulty persuaded to seek relief at the hands of

a surgeon; to whose operations with knife and probe, excruciating as they must have been, he seemed to be insensible, bidding him not to spare his miserable flesh. His last Lent was passed at Issy, when he spent eight hours a day in prayer, and, being forbidden to make it on his knees, he prostrated himself on the pavement of the chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette, a holy spot in which he took a special delight. The rest of his day was occupied in saying the rosary, as he walked or, rather, dragged himself along, and in reading books of piety. After a most hard and laborious life, a life of continual mortification and penance, he died on June 12th, 1703, at eighty years of age, within the walls of St. Sulpice, as he had always prayed it might be given him to do, although he had never been a regular inmate of the house. On his body were found a rough hairshirt and an iron chain, which he had worn both night and day. It may be well imagined what pain and anguish of heart such a man must have endured when, through the admission into the house of an ecclesiastic who had been educated by the Oratorians at St. Magloire, his community became infected with the plague of Jansenism. Hence scandalous contentions and divisions, which embittered his closing years; and the more so as the act of union with the seminary had by an unfortunate oversight been so constructed that the Bishop experienced great difficulty in applying an effectual remedy to the evil. In fact, it was not until the year 1716 that, after repeated and urgent requests on the part of M. de Tressan, then Bishop of Nantes, M. Leschassier, the fourth Superior of St. Sulpice, sent certain members of the Community who were natives of the diocese to replace the professors who had been expelled on account of their erroneous tenets. At length, in 1728, all obstacles being finally removed, the Sulpicians resumed the sole management of the seminary, which they have continued to the present day.

Every journey that M. Olier made resulted in the establishment of some new seminary; indeed, wherever he went some good seed was let fall which afterwards germinated and fructified, or some salutary impression was left which sooner or later made itself felt. His mission, as he knew, was to his brethren of the clergy, and he neglected no opportunity of fulfilling it. Meeting a young ecclesiastic one day on the road, he asked him what he was thinking of, and, the other saying in reply that he was thinking of nothing, "Eh, what!" he exclaimed in a voice which, while it betokened

grief and surprise, had in it a tone of sweet compassion, "has not an ecclesiastic God to think of, and some worship ever to pay Him in the secret of his heart?" When, in the course of his journeys, he found himself in a parish where the priest was diligent in instructing the people, he seemed unable to show him respect enough, or to testify all the joy and satisfaction he felt. "But alas!" he writes, "it is a wonder to meet with one good pastor in a whole province. My only solace amidst the desolation which I suffer is in a few ecclesiastics who are established in solid virtue and in the prudence of a fervent zeal." In Provence, however, his addresses to the clergy produced a most powerful effect. "They cannot cease talking of them," wrote P. Yvan; "they declare they never heard anything which moved them so much, and only wish they could have listened to you longer, that their reformation might have been the more perfect." Encouraged by these indications, M. Olier deputed M. Philippe, an ecclesiastic of learning and judgment as well as virtue, and a native of those parts, to found a seminary at Aix, which, on account of its university, was frequented by a large number of students. This good man, though not a member of the Community, was a disciple of M. Olier, for whom he had a profound veneration together with an undoubting confidence in his spiritual insight and power with God. For once, on the feast of St. Sulpice, when he was suffering from a violent fever, M. Olier had brought him the crucifix of the Mère Agnès, saying, "Take this; it will cure you;" wherein he seems to have acted in obedience to a divine direction, for scarcely had the sick man taken in his hands the image of his Redeemer when the fever sensibly abated and, to the astonishment of his physician, he rose from his bed the next day completely restored to health. Such is the account which M. de Lantages gives in his Life of the holy nun, and he adds that M. Philippe was convinced that his cure was nothing short of miraculous. Yielding, therefore, to M. Olier's earnest solicitations, he resolved to dedicate to the work imposed upon him all his energies of mind and body, his fortune, and his very life. On arriving at Aix, his first act was to purchase a house close to the Archiepiscopal palace; and then, with the sanction of the Cathedral Chapter,—for the see was vacant through the death of Cardinal de Sainte-Cécile,* brother of Cardinal Mazarin,—and with the co-operation of several priests

* See note at page 383.

who, like himself, had received their ecclesiastical training at St. Sulpice, he commenced a work which brought joy and consolation to the heart of God's servant, who never ceased to sustain him in his labours with the utmost charity and zeal. It was M. Philippe's endeavour (as he subsequently said) to conduct the seminary in perfect accordance with the spirit and maxims in which he had himself been formed, fully hoping that the Community of St. Sulpice would soon be able to undertake its management, as M. Olier had engaged to do. But, the see still remaining unfilled, the servant of God was unwilling to adopt any permanent measures until the views of the future Archbishop could be ascertained; for, as was his wont, he desired to conform in all things to the Episcopal will and pleasure.

Cardinal Grimaldi, who had been Nuncio in France, was nominated to the vacant see in 1648, but it was not till seven years later that he was able to take possession. Struck with the benefits which the associates had conferred upon the town, this prelate, who desired to take St. Charles Borromeo for his model, at once approved the institution and, on October 7th, 1656, constituted it his diocesan seminary and appointed M. Philippe as its director. But, as the latter still persisted in the views which he had entertained from the first, Cardinal Grimaldi, in spite of the resolution he had formed not to employ the services of any community, regular or secular, in the matter of ecclesiastical education, wrote with his own hand to M. Olier and begged him to send some of his priests to govern the house. Touched with the confidence thus shown him and the exception which the Archbishop had made in his favour, the servant of God consented to undertake the charge, and the Archbishop forthwith purchased a house more spacious and commodious than that which M. Philippe had procured, and caused a chapel to be erected together with some additional buildings. But, other and more pressing objects intervening to prevent M. Olier from fulfilling his intentions, the Cardinal was fain to content himself with sending the directors of the seminary, including even M. Philippe himself, to reside awhile at St. Sulpice in order that they might be made practically acquainted with the discipline of the house and thoroughly penetrated with its interior life. By February, 1658, the new buildings had become habitable, and on November 4th, in that year, being the feast of St. Charles, the chapel was opened for divine service. For nearly thirty years the Archbishop

and M. Philippe never ceased their appeals for aid, which, however, were destined to be of no avail, for just when the long-sought object was on the point of being attained Cardinal Grimaldi died on the same day of the same month, 1685; and his successor, M. Legoux de Laberchère, not renewing the application, M. Tronson, who was then Superior of St. Sulpice, acting on the principles to which the Society has ever most strictly adhered, would not take the initiative in the matter, although M. Philippe went in person to plead his cause. Accordingly, the Seminary of Aix continued to be directed by its own community down to the period of the Revolution.

Fortified as he had been by the general approbation of the Episcopal body, M. Olier nevertheless, as we have seen, scrupulously awaited the express invitation of each particular prelate before seeking to exercise his mission within his diocese; a tacit or implied consent he did not deem sufficient. Thus, in 1652, while at the waters of Bourbon, he was solicited by many influential persons to lay the foundation of a seminary at Avignon, where, although efforts had been made in that direction and a Provincial Council had, in 1594, even adopted certain rules for the conduct of such establishments, nothing had as yet been accomplished. But, finding on his arrival at Viviers that the Archbishop was himself lukewarm on the subject, he at once abandoned the design, although one which his devotion to the Apostolic See, to which Avignon at that time belonged, strongly urged him to carry out. Faithful to the principle which was the pole-star of his life, he would not forestall by one moment the leadings of Divine Providence. "We must walk step by step," he said, "following the majestic and eternal decrees of God in all things;" and God in His own good time brought about the fulfilment of the object which His servant had so much at heart. Two priests of the country, both of whom had been students of St. Sulpice, from a motive of respect to the holy founder and with a view to fulfilling what they knew had been his intentions, formed a small community of students in the hope that the Sulpicians might be better disposed to undertake the direction of a house which was already existent. And in this they were not disappointed: the charge was accepted by M. Leschassier, and the Seminary of Avignon which goes by the name of St. Charles, and which in its turn gave birth to that of Ste. Garde, is still to this day conducted by M. Olier's spiritual children.

In 1650 the servant of God had sent M. de Queylus to aid the

Bishop of Viviers, M. de Suze, in founding a seminary, but the attempt had met with an embarrassing opposition on the part of those from whom it ought rather to have received the readiest support. The establishment was represented as a sort of respectable prison, the inmates of which were made to lead a life of perpetual slavery and to practise mortifications beyond human endurance. On his way to Avignon M. Olier had, as related, stopped at Viviers; he arrived, as it happened, two days before the opening of the diocesan synod, and his presence seemed to have the effect, not only of healing dissensions, but inspiring the clergy with a lively zeal in behalf of the infant seminary. The Bishop made over to it some ancient buildings, situated in the higher part of the town, which had once formed the Episcopal residence, and the ecclesiastics who were present contributed liberally towards the necessary repairs as well as for the support of the house. In the following June the Bishop issued an ordinance, in a general synod of his clergy, formally establishing it as the seminary of the diocese. But even after this authoritative sanction had been accorded, the prejudices that existed were not entirely removed, and M. de Queylus had still many difficulties to encounter. All that for some time he was able to do was to give the usual exercises to the candidates for ordination, and to receive such of the Curés as came of their own accord to make a spiritual retreat. M. Olier, however, never lost confidence in the promises of God, and, after the withdrawal of M. de Queylus, continued to supply the institute with efficient directors to the day of his death in 1657. In the September of that year his successor, M. de Bretonvilliers, came himself to Viviers and, in concert with M. de Suze, re-organized the seminary. M. Fuselier and M. Macé were summoned from Alais, whither they had been sent by M. Olier to conduct a mission, and were intrusted with the government of the house.

The Bishop now extended the term of residence: candidates for the tonsure were to remain eight days, and those who sought minor orders ten days; while such as aspired to the higher orders were to spend three months in the seminary preparatory to receiving each of them respectively. Parish priests and others who had received but scant preparation for the sacred ministry were invited to spend a certain time at the seminary in order to being more perfectly instructed in the duties of their state and in the functions of their office or, at least, to go through the exercises of a spiritual retreat;

and of this invitation many availed themselves. Besides the personal advantage to themselves, this act of theirs was of great immediate benefit to their flocks, as during their absence ecclesiastics of piety and experience were sent to supply their places. Two priests, indeed, were kept in constant readiness to go at a moment's notice wherever their services might be needed; and, in order that the Curés might not be charged with their maintenance during the time they were absent from their parishes, M. de Bretonvilliers engaged to give 600 livres, and M. de Suze 300, annually for that object. Thus a series of missions was provided for numerous country-places which were productive of abundant fruits. Sermons of a rousing character were preached, simple instructions given, and the people exhorted to make a general confession, an exhortation the more necessary that many, never having had the opportunity of disclosing the state of their souls to any but their own pastor, had, unhappily, been tempted to make sacrilegious confessions or had deserted the tribunal of penance altogether. The difference between the clergy who had received ecclesiastical training and those who had never enjoyed that advantage very soon attracted attention, and the seminary became the object of general admiration. Some, indeed, of those who, either from ignorance of their vocation or from unworthy motives, had offered themselves for the clerical state abandoned their design and embraced other professions; but the greater part, when they quitted the seminary, exhibited an amount of devotion, enlightenment, and laborious zeal to which the people had been hitherto little accustomed. Clergy from other dioceses also came for spiritual retreats or for a longer course of instruction; so that in a short time the house at Viviers became a fruitful source of grace to extensive districts in Auvergne, Dauphiné, the Comtat, and Provence. According to his wont, M. Olier claimed to have no more than a temporary connection with the seminary, although he and his community had borne a portion of the expenses, and for more than fifty years there was no formal act of union between it and St. Sulpice; but in 1706 the Bishop and the clergy of the diocese, fearing that if the establishment ceased to be conducted by those who had founded it their withdrawal would be fatal to its existence, begged the Society to undertake its permanent direction.

From Viviers M. Olier set out for Le Puy, and on his way passed through Privas, with the view of visiting Saint-Agrève, famous at that time for its shrine of the Blessed Virgin. There this devout

client of Mary again renewed the offer of his service and that of his Community to the august Queen of the Clergy and presented to her, in token of his pious veneration, a striking picture which he had caused to be painted for the purpose. In repairing to Le Puy he had no thought of contributing to the foundation of a seminary in that town. Such an establishment had been in contemplation for ten years, and he had been repeatedly solicited to commence the work, but he had been unable to spare any of his priests; and, besides, the necessary funds were wanting. But now a sudden enthusiasm was kindled in the breasts of both clergy and laity, before which all obstacles disappeared. The Bishop, M. de Maupas,* convened a meeting of ecclesiastics and other influential persons, and begged M. Olier to lay before them the necessity of making personal sacrifices for an undertaking of such paramount importance. The servant of God recollected himself for a few moments, and then addressed the assembly with so much energy and fervour that a seminary was resolved upon as by acclamation. M. de Maupas, himself one of the greatest orators of the day, although he had often had experience of M. Olier's extraordinary powers, was astonished at the burning torrent that issued from his lips; and long afterwards, when speaking of the circumstance, he said that his address on the occasion "abounded not only in grandeur, force, and light, but in that fire of the Holy Ghost which warms the coldest hearts and stirs the most insensible." As for the servant of God himself, he attributed the result to the powerful interposition of Our Lady of Le Puy, to whom he cherished a particular devotion. For her sake, and in his zeal for the glory of God and the good of the diocese, he not only contributed towards the establishment out of his private means but undertook its government and direction.

M. Hugues de Pradier d'Agrain, a pious layman of the town, put his house at the Bishop's disposal, until such time as a suitable building could be provided, and M. Olier summoned M. Tronson† and M. Le Breton from Viviers to inaugurate the work. But the

* Afterwards Bishop of Evreux. Readers of the Life of M. Boudon will recognise in M. de Maupas the prelate who, unhappily, was betrayed into the error of crediting for a time the calumnious accusations of which that holy man was the victim, and treating him in consequence with unjust severity.

† Fourth son of Mme. Tronson, hereafter called M. de Saint-Antoine, from his abbey of that name. He must not be confounded with his elder brother, M. Louis Tronson, of whose vocation to the Community an account was given above, and who was the third Superior of the Seminary of St. Sulpice.

man on whom the Bishop had set his eyes to be superior of the new seminary was M. de Lantages. This ecclesiastic was one of M. Olier's best subjects, for whom he entertained the tenderest affection and whom of all the members of his community he could least afford to lose; but, true to his engagement of making his society the handmaid of the Episcopate, he yielded at once to the Bishop's request, declaring, however, that in surrendering M. de Lantages to him he was giving him his heart. The engaging qualities of this young priest soon gained him the confidence of all with whom he came in contact, and M. de Maupas, thinking to render his remarkable gifts the more available to the benefit of the diocese, insisted on appointing him his vicar-general. This design, however, he reluctantly abandoned, on M. Olier representing that he should be obliged to recall M. de Lantages to Paris. In adopting this course, the servant of God was determined by the consideration that the clergy would be less disposed to open their hearts as freely to one who was invested with such authority over them, and would be tempted to act rather from motives of human respect than of confidence and love. Nowhere, it may be added, were the blessings of Heaven poured forth with more abundance than on the community of Le Puy. In a few years the face of the diocese was so completely changed that the Bishop, after M. Olier's death, declared, in the fulness of his feelings, to M. de Bretonvilliers that since the establishment of the seminary no one would recognise his clergy as the same men. "I am an unprofitable servant," he would say in the confidence of friendship; "my election to the Episcopate made me tremble; nevertheless I hope that God will not deal rigorously with me, and that the two seminaries of Le Puy and Evreux, which I established for His glory and the good of the Church, will obtain mercy for me."

We have seen with what zeal and self-devotion M. Olier laboured as a missionary for the sanctification of the provinces in which at the time he held benefices, Le Vivarais, Le Velai, and Auvergne. He felt that it was a work to which he had been called by God, particularly as regarded the diocese of Clermont; for, being in prayer one day in the cathedral church of that town, the Blessed Virgin had been pleased to make known to him that she desired him to do a work there for the glory of her Son. Although fully assured in his own mind that in no way could that glory be more effectually promoted than by the establishment of a seminary, yet, as no intima-

tion had been given him as to the nature of the services he was to render, he awaited in patience a fuller disclosure of the Divine will. It came at length, when nothing was less in his thoughts, in the ordinary way of an invitation from the Bishop to found a seminary in his diocese. Hitherto nothing more had been required of candidates for ordination than a retreat of eight days, and even this was a practice only of recent institution, for which the piety of the Cardinal de Rochefoucauld had provided the funds. When M. Louis d'Estaing was first elevated to the see of Clermont, he had endeavoured to make an arrangement by which the exercises should be given by a religious order; but, this attempt having failed, he determined, with the unanimous consent of his clergy in a general assembly, which was held April 16th, 1653, to establish a diocesan seminary and invite M. Olier to undertake its direction. There was a difficulty at first in finding a suitable building, but it was eventually resolved to accept the Priory of St. Ferréol, which was offered for the purpose by the Benedictines of St. Allyre. It had a large plot of ground attached to it, and also a church * and a presbytery. With the aid of the clergy the Priory was repaired and enlarged; and on February 23rd, 1656, M. d'Estaing declared the seminary canonically erected and entrusted to "the direction of M. Gabriel de Queylus, Abbé of Loc-Dieu and priest of St. Sulpice, who by his extraordinary prudence and great merits" was eminently fitted for the office.

In the course of the year 1654, while the works were in progress, M. Olier, who passed several months at Bourbon or in the neighbourhood, had visited Clermont at the invitation of the Bishop, who desired to confer with him respecting the proposed establishment. He was accompanied by M. de Bretonvilliers, who generously contributed 2,000 livres towards the construction of the

* This church, although of modest proportions, was rich in traditional graces. Dedicated in the first instance to St. Maurice, it was restored about the year 710 by Bishop Proculus, who erected a magnificent tomb for St. Bonnet, one of his predecessors in the see. The translation of the Saint's remains was attended with such prodigies that the church was henceforth called by his name; and, although in 1095 the body of the holy prelate was transferred to the cathedral, his name still remained attached to the edifice which for more than three centuries had contained his tomb.

M. Louis d'Estaing, in accordance with directions left in his last testament, was interred in the church of St. Bonnet, as were also his immediate successor, Gilbert de Vény d'Arbouse, and many Directors of the seminary. Both church and tombs were swept away at the Revolution.

seminary. Once assured of the Divine intentions, the servant of God lost no time in prosecuting the work which he had been called to do, and in the month of May, 1656, he sent four of his priests to Clermont to assist M. de Queylus in preparing candidates for the Pentecostal ordination; but the regular exercises were not actually commenced till six months later. After the departure of M. de Queylus, who was occupied with the affairs of Montréal, as will be hereafter narrated, M. de Poussé, whom the reader will recollect as having been among the earliest seminarists of Vaugirard, and who was the first director of the Solitude at Avron, became superior; but in the following year he was succeeded by M. Pierre Couderc, whom M. Olier had placed at the head of the restored seminary of Vaugirard. The servant of God having, as usual, taken no measures to secure for himself and his successors the government of the house, it remained independent of the Society until 1659, two years after his death, when it was incorporated with the Seminary of St. Sulpice. One important advantage which it was the means of obtaining for the diocese, over and above the formation of a zealous and well-instructed clergy, was the utter suppression of Jansenism, which previously had prevailed to a lamentable extent.

M. Olier contributed also towards the reformation of the clergy of Auvergne, by assisting in the establishment of the seminary of St. Flour. The deplorable condition of this diocese, which was of great extent, may be estimated from the fact that it was computed to have within it from 6,000 to 7,000 ecclesiastics who had no competent knowledge of the duties of their state. M. Olier, who, from his connection with the Abbey of Pébrac, had long been aware of evils which he was powerless to remedy, felt himself called upon to make some sacrifices for a prelate whose zeal deserved all the assistance that could be rendered him. M. de Mont Rouge, finding himself utterly at a loss for coadjutors among his clergy on whom he could rely, had collected forty or fifty young men in his own Episcopal residence, and placed others under the instruction of such priests of his diocese as by their piety and knowledge seemed best fitted for the task. M. Olier's first thought was to send M. Couderc to the Bishop's aid but, having, as we have seen, disposed of that ecclesiastic elsewhere, his choice fell on M. Eymère, who by birth was a subject of the diocese. This very able man, after completing his course of

philosophy in Auvergne, went to study theology at the Sorbonne and, while so engaged, was led by the good Providence of God to place himself under the guidance of M. Olier, by whom he was for several years employed in the ministerial work of the parish. His talents and virtues seemed to designate him for the office of educating young clerics, and in 1650, or 1651, he was cordially accepted by the Bishop as director of his seminary; which, it may be added, under the government of this devoted priest became at once the recipient and the source of abundant blessings from Heaven. Some few years afterwards, when the house was firmly established and M. Eymère had succeeded in forming ecclesiastics, subjects of the diocese, who were competent to continue the work he had begun, we find him among those fervent ecclesiastics whom the great reputation which M. Pavillon enjoyed had attracted to Aleth, to aid that prelate in the reform of his diocese. But to his honour be it stated that he remained faithful to the cause of God and His Church when, in 1664, the Bishop of Aleth, unhappily, threw the weight of his influence on the side of the Jansenistic innovators. The Seminary of St. Flour was governed for more than twenty years by priests of the diocese, until M. de la Motte-Houdencourt, in 1674, united it to the Congregation of St. Lazare.

At the same time that through the efforts of M. Olier and his disciples the Seminary of Clermont was commencing its work of educating the clergy, another house was being founded in the mountainous district which formed the eastern boundary of the diocese. This was the Seminary of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, which on January 5th, 1659, was canonically erected by M. Louis d'Estaing, and in 1668 was approved and confirmed by the Cardinal de Vendôme, Papal Legate in France. Its object, in addition to that of preparing candidates for ordination, was to give missions in country-places during several months in the year. This seminary owed its permanent success to the exertions of M. Jacques Planat, who had been one of those zealous men whom M. Olier invited to take part in his first mission in Auvergne. When the servant of God took charge of the parish of St. Sulpice, M. Planat resigned his office of Provost in the diocese of St. Flour, and gave himself wholly to the work of the reform. The writer of the Life of the Mère Marie-Marthe de Biron, who died at St. Flour in 1664, describes him as one who "by his piety and

doctrine gained the approbation of all who were most enlightened in the science of the saints." But, ever ready to make sacrifices for the sake of what was the mission of his life, M. Olier did not shrink from depriving himself of his valuable services, and that, too, at a time when he most needed them, and in 1645 gave him up to M. de Foix, who made him his grand-vicar and employed him for five or six years in the reform of his diocese of Pamiers. After filling several similar offices in other dioceses with great distinction M. Planat devoted himself entirely to the Seminary of Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, of which for more than twenty years he was the main support, and thus came to be regarded as its founder. Before his death the seminary was, with the consent of the Bishop of Clermont, incorporated with that of Notre Dame de Bannelle, which was situated in a milder and more genial climate; and the union subsisted until the Revolution. Being essentially a community of missionary priests, it was never affiliated, even during M. Planat's life, to that of St. Sulpice, which occupied itself exclusively with the education of the clergy.

A few words may here be said respecting the Seminary of Besançon, inasmuch as its first superior, M. René de Mornay de Villeterre, was one of M. Olier's disciples. The work which he especially affected was the spiritual direction of the seminarists, for which he possessed a wonderful gift. "While his virtues and lights," says the Abbé Jacquenet, historian of the house, "eminently qualified him for communicating to young men the ecclesiastical spirit, his birth and knowledge of the world enabled him to give them sage advice regarding the shoals they must avoid in the exercise of the pastoral ministry." Although M. de Grammont, the Archbishop, did not adopt the rules of St. Sulpice in their entirety, the seminary remained in closest union with the Society. In 1666 he entrusted his nephew to the care of M. de Bretonvilliers, and some years later sent one of his young directors to M. Tronson to be instructed in the duties of his office. After two years passed at St. Sulpice, this young priest, by name M. Langrognet, became superior of the Seminary of Besançon, and introduced among the exercises of the house the particular examen, as he had seen it practised during his term of probation. To him also the clergy and people of the diocese were indebted for the blessing of being evangelised by the famous Abbé de la Pérouse, one of M. Olier's most beloved disciples, of whom we shall have occasion to speak

hereafter. The retreat which he gave to the priests of the diocese and the missions which he preached to the population generally were attended with most consoling results.

Among the many seminaries in the establishment of which M. Olier had a share ought to be included that of St. Irénée de Lyon. From a child the servant of God had retained a singular affection for the town, so famous for its ecclesiastical traditions, in which he had first been nourished with the milk of Christian piety and clothed with the humble livery of the Church. He had even entertained the desire of contributing in some effectual way towards the evangelisation of the vast diocese; but, fearful of outrunning the behests of Divine Providence, he had been fain to content himself with recommending to his successor the erection of a seminary whenever the occasion offered. Accordingly, M. de Bretonvilliers, two years after the decease of his spiritual father, availed himself of the favourable dispositions of the then Archbishop, M. Camille de Neuville, to execute the charge which had been laid upon him. The first superior was M. d'Hurtevent, and the records of the Archbishop's life afford abundant proof of the great things which were accomplished under his prudent and energetic rule. "I have no hesitation in declaring," says the Père Guicheron, in his *Life of Camille de Neuville*, "that the greatest work this prelate did was the establishment of this house. Good people will eternally bless him for it, particularly when they remember what manner of man M. d'Hurtevent, its first superior, was and the great services he rendered to the diocese." He was succeeded, in 1671, by M. Maillard, who, as we have seen, had been first his coadjutor and subsequently his successor at Nantes.

The Seminary of Amiens was inaugurated in the year which deprived St. Sulpice of its venerable founder. The Abbé de Sèry was named superior, but, as he had not himself received a strictly ecclesiastical education, the Bishop, François Faure, who was a Franciscan, begged M. Olier to send him one of his priests to aid and instruct the Abbé in the work he had undertaken to do. M. de Parlages, a doctor of the Sorbonne and Superior of the Community, was selected for the office; but after a sojourn of three years he was recalled by M. de Bretonvilliers, for the main reason that neither superior nor the other directors cordially conformed themselves to the methods and rules which he deemed necessary for the efficient conduct of the house; and the Bishop having, as a

religious, no distrust of Congregations, delivered over the management of his seminary to the Priests of the Mission.

We have seen how throughout his life M. Olier never took a step without the sanction of ecclesiastical authority, even when that authority was wielded by unworthy hands, and at once retired when that sanction was withdrawn, or even grudgingly accorded. Of this several instances have come before our notice. But nothing, perhaps, more strikingly exhibits his respect for the Episcopate, and the attitude of entire dependence which he maintained towards it, than the course he adopted in the case of M. du Bosquet, Bishop of Clermont-Lodève. The former occupant of the see, M. Plantavit de la Pause, had assigned the Priory of St. Paul to the priests of St. Sulpice for the commencement of an ecclesiastical seminary, and M. Couderc had been made superior of the house. Finding, however, that M. du Bosquet, whether on account of his Jansenistic predilections or from some other cause, did not bestow the same marks of confidence on this ecclesiastic and his colleagues as had been shown them by his predecessor, M. Olier desired him to resign his office into the hands of the Bishop and to put the whole community at his sole disposal. At the same time he addressed a letter to M. du Bosquet, in which he says he has reminded M. Couderc that it is not fitting to remain in any house without the master's cordial assent, and that no blessing could be expected where this condition was wanting. "It is on this maxim," he continues, "that the Seminary of St. Sulpice reposes as on a foundation. It has reserved to itself no other rights over such of its subjects as go out from it at the call of their Lordships the Bishops than that of continuing to remind them of the absolute dependence which they must maintain towards them, and of reproving them in case they should fail in this respect. This is why, amidst the pain which I suffer at seeing one of the subjects of the house no longer meriting your regard, I nevertheless experience a real joy in making the entire sacrifice of this benefice, in order to testify, in one of our first establishments, that the members of the Community have no life, no proper end, no directing principle of conduct, but in obedience to their Lordships the Bishops. They may call for us, and they may send us away, at their pleasure; and the house professes to be nothing, and to possess nothing, save in pure and simple dependence upon them. A work of God ought never to be the cause of aught that is unbecoming, or contrary to the simplicity and justice of the Gospel; and, if I thought

there would ever go forth from St. Sulpice a single subject of the house who should oppose the mandates of their Lordships the Bishops, or lend his countenance to any violation of that reverence which is their due, I would pray that the Seminary might be destroyed and become an object of anathema in the face of the whole world." These words, followed as they were by an immediate abandonment of the seminary and of the whole work which had been attended with such signal success, are sufficient to show that in the conduct of his institute, as in all his other acts, public and personal, this great man continued true to the principle which had ever guided him, of following simply the will of God, and looking for the indication of that will in the command or the cordial assent of ecclesiastical superiors.

Of this we have a beautiful example in the letter which he wrote in reply to an application he had received from the Duke of Orleans, who, after his banishment to his castle of Blois, was desirous (as already notified) of establishing a community of priests devoted to the education of the clergy. "That everything may be done," he wrote, "in the order of our Lord and of the Church, it would be expedient and, indeed, necessary that his Royal Highness should be pleased to speak to the Bishop of Chartres,* or, at least, write and communicate to him his views and intentions. For we cannot and ought not to hope to do anything unless he approves and commissions us thereto. You know that a Bishop, in his diocese, is as a father in his family, a head to a body, a superior in his house, and that to him it belongs to give orders, to move all the members, and to command his children to do what it pleases him. For myself, who am but an outdoor servant, and have not the honour of belonging to his household, I cannot take upon myself to discharge any function until he does me the honour of calling me to his aid, unworthy creature that I am." M. Olier was the more anxious to promote the Duke's design as he hoped it might eventuate in a seminary for the diocese of Chartres, which was especially dear to him on account of the many tokens of loving care and protection which he had received from our Blessed Lady in her own cathedral church. To this object, he said, he was ready to devote all that remained to him of the proceeds of the two benefices which he had held in the diocese, —nay, all that he possessed or could ever possess in this world, and his life itself. "Herein," he continued, "I should only be accom-

* The see of Blois was not erected till the year 1697.

plishing my desires, which are to see myself poor, that I may die denuded of everything, like our Lord upon the cross." But the whole project seems to have been frustrated by the intrigues of the Jansenists, who were numerous at Orleans and had considerable influence with M. Alphonse d'Elbène, the Bishop of that see, whose consent was necessary to the erection of the seminary, as it was intended to include his diocese as well as that of Chartres. The clergy of the latter diocese, led on by that ardent reformer, Adrien Bourdoise, were active in promoting its establishment, and the Bishop, M. Lescot, had even engaged the services of three priests of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet for the work, but the institute was not placed on any solid foundation until M. Ferdinand de Neuville, in 1680, called to his aid the Priests of the Mission.

The confidence which the Bishops reposed in him, and the success which had crowned his efforts, so far from exciting in M. Olier's mind any feelings of complacency in regard either to himself or to his community, seemed rather to deepen his humility and to produce in him a more perfect spirit of subjection. Thus, an ecclesiastic having urged him to undertake a work which would be highly beneficial to the clergy of his diocese, he advised him to apply to others who, he said, were more capable of bringing it to a successful issue. But, at the same time, being reluctant to refuse what the applicant might not be willing to entrust to any but himself, he added, "Such, however, as we are,—so low and vile in the Church, —we are wholly at your service, and ready to second the zeal which God kindles in your soul. But we beg you, Monsieur, to be so good as to have the matter fully commended to God, in order that we may put no obstacle or impediment in its way. There is so much more of the charity and mercy of God in you, as you make choice of what is meanest and most contemptible in the world to further your designs. Yet this very choice inspires me with the better hope, inasmuch as God seems thereby to desire to make the thing His own, choosing instruments which are nothing worth and empty of aught that is good, save the desire to serve Him and His Church: this it is, Monsieur, that makes me wholly yours, as being one of His dearest children."

He displayed sentiments of the same touching humility when the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. Bagni, begged him to send some of his priests to found a seminary in Greece. While conferring with his community on the subject, which excited his liveliest interest, he suddenly

exclaimed, in a voice that faltered with emotion, "But what are we that we should be thought of for such an enterprise?" and he proceeded to give vent to his feelings in terms of such lowly self-abasement that his disciples were no less affected than edified by his humility and piety. What the issue was there are no documents to show.

If M. Olier gave the preference, whenever opportunity offered, to the Priests of the Mission, St. Vincent of Paul, their founder, was wont, in his turn, to praise and extol the Community of St. Sulpice at the expense of his own. Thus, on one occasion when application was made to him for aid, he replied, "The priests of St. Sulpice, whose mission it is to found seminaries in episcopal cities, are far more competent than we are to commence and consolidate this good work which you have so deeply at heart." And, writing to a lady of quality who had a fund at her disposal which had been bequeathed to her by the *seigneurs*, her predecessors, for the formation of good ecclesiastics, he recommended that she should apply it in aid of a seminary which had been founded by St. Sulpice. "If you make this application, Madame," he said, "you may rest assured that it will be carried out, in the manner those *seigneurs* desired, for the advancement of the ecclesiastical state; and, if you will be pleased to inform yourself as to the good that is done at St. Sulpice, you may confidently hope for similar results when this community is established in the place in question; for everywhere it is animated with the same spirit and has but one and the same object, the glory of God."

So did these two great servants of God contend in holy rivalry together, depreciating themselves and exalting each the other.

CHAPTER VII.

VARIOUS MISSIONARY ENTERPRISES. FOUNDATION OF THE COLONY AND SEMINARY OF MONTRÉAL.

M. OLIER'S zeal for the sanctification of the sacerdotal order did not terminate in this object. If he would form holy and devoted priests, possessed with an habitual sense of the dignity and sacredness of their office, it was that souls might be more abundantly gained to God. This thirst for souls had led him to form the design of resigning his parish and his seminary, and quitting France for ever to go and labour for the conversion of the infidel nations of the East. When, therefore, the Papal Nuncio at Paris urged him to accept the bishopric of Babylon, which the Shah of Persia desired might be conferred upon a Frenchman, in preference to a native of Spain or Portugal, with which countries he was at war, the servant of God willingly lent himself to the proposal, and was only dissuaded from carrying his design into effect by the strong opposition he encountered on the part of all the members of the Community.

A few years afterwards, when it was in contemplation to send Vicars-Apostolic into China, M. Olier, in spite of his declining health, offered himself with all the ardour of his soul to the Jesuit Father, Alexander of Rhodes, one of the most celebrated missionaries of the time, who had been charged by the Pope with the selection of fit subjects for consecration at Paris. Convinced, however, that the work in which the founder of St. Sulpice was engaged was one to which he had been specially called by God, the missionary would not accept the sacrifice. Throwing himself on his knees, M. Olier conjured him, by all the motives which a burning love for souls suggested, to grant him his desire; but, on the Father still persisting in his refusal, he humbly adored the will of God and acknowledged himself unworthy of the favour for which he had pleaded. "Eight days ago," he writes, "I let the pride of my heart appear, in

testifying the desire I had of accompanying this great Apostle of Tonquin and Cochin China. But the holy man, or, rather, our Lord in him, judged me unworthy. So I am obliged to remain here in my nothingness, engaged in the work which the Divine Majesty has given me to do, where, filled with a sense of my own vileness and wretchedness, I shall sigh and groan all my life long for having rendered myself unworthy by my infidelities of that honour, receiving with love and joy the crosses and sufferings I meet with in the service of the Lord. Charity crucified is the safest. . . . This hidden life keeps me more in my own centre, which is littleness of spirit and nothingness. Those other employments have something brilliant about them which would inspire me with apprehension; but that to which our Lord has graciously vouchsafed to call this poor sinner is more hidden, more unknown. It has a closer affinity with the self-annihilation of our Master, who departed not out of Judea, to do all the good He might have done by the preaching of the Gospel, but, leaving it to His disciples to display the hidden, unknown zeal of His soul for the glory of God, was content to labour in that little country, and among the people to which He had been sent."

Unable to satisfy his own devotion, M. Olier had the consolation of seeing several priests of the Community accompany the missionary to China, where they spent their lives in the propagation of the faith; but the project of sending Vicars-Apostolic to the Indies met with many discouragements, which were a sore trial to his ardent zeal. To comfort him in this affliction, God was pleased to favour His servant with a presentiment of what He would ere long bring about in furtherance of the object which lay so near his heart. For in a letter to his director, still preserved, he says that, being one day transported, as it were, out of himself by his desire to spread abroad the faith among all creatures, he was moved to exclaim, "O my All, whom I would fain send through all the world!" and at the same moment there seemed to rise before his eyes a seminary having for its object the conversion of the heathen nations, and supported by a few liberal souls whom God had inspired with the thought. This prevision was fulfilled when, in the year succeeding his death, three Vicars-Apostolic were sent to China and Siam and, shortly after, the Seminary of Foreign Missions, whose glory is in all the Church, was established in his own parish of St. Sulpice. But, although the Community did not feel itself justified in undertaking foreign missions, as being alien to the object for which it was instituted,

nevertheless it continued for forty years to send its subjects into heathen countries; among whom was M. Louis de Cicé, scion of an ancient Breton family, who, after evangelising the savages of Canada, was made Vicar-Apostolic of Siam, where he died after twenty-six years of toil and suffering.

The servant of God, however, endeavoured to indemnify himself for not being permitted to carry the Gospel to the heathen by another enterprise of laborious charity, the objects of which were nearer home. In the spring of 1652 this zealous pastor, as already related, was seized with a violent fever, which reduced him to such extremity that the physicians despaired of his recovery; and on the 20th of June, in the same year, he resigned his cure. This act was no sooner accomplished than he suddenly rallied, and was pronounced to be out of danger. For the restoration of his health he was sent to spend the ensuing winter in the south; but, instead of passing the time in complete repose, as was recommended by his medical advisers and as his state of convalescence demanded, he employed himself in organizing a mission on an extensive scale for the conversion of the Protestant populations of Le Vivarais and the Cévennes. The design was one which he had long formed, and he was moved to its execution by two considerations—the extreme spiritual destitution of those particular districts, and the charge which, as he believed, God had specially laid upon him of rekindling the torch of faith and piety in Le Velay, Le Vivarais, and Auvergne. From Geneva the heresy of Calvin had made successful inroads into these quarters, where it still held its ground, in spite of all the endeavours of Louis XIII. and Cardinal de Richelieu, who, after the taking of La Rochelle, had sought to expel it from its fastnesses by force of arms. The servant of God resolved to wage a war of quite another character, the weapons he would use being those of charity and sweet persuasion and, above all, the invincible power of Apostolic virtues. On his way through Lyons he conferred with his friend M. Crétenet, who has been already mentioned as the founder of an association of missionary priests, and, proceeding thence to Viviers, where he arrived on the eve of a diocesan synod, he could no longer doubt that Providence was opening a way to the fulfilment of his long-cherished desire. His proposal was received with acclamation, and all the clergy who were present solicited a mission for their parishes. Full of joy, he wrote to M. de Bretonvilliers, telling him that Viviers was on the point of yielding to the Lord; that at Lyons

he had found a flying camp of missionaries, all filled with the spirit of Apostles; and that on the morrow he was starting for Le Puy, to see if there also the fire were ready to be applied. He ended by bidding him send labourers into the harvest, as many as he could collect. "I want," he said, "only hearts devoid of self, simple, virtuous souls; from such we may look for miracles. Subtle and self-sufficient spirits, which do not study their own annihilation, or who have not received the prevenient grace of it, will never do any great thing; unless, indeed, as sometimes happens, zeal for work and the very labour of it produce a change in them." To which he adds, in half earnestness, half banter, "Tell our brother Chénart to make good haste; we must carry him off and set him to work to save souls. Let him not suppose I am going to leave him there like a sluggard, or any of our dear children of the Seminary. Stir them up for me in the Friday conferences. To stay at Paris is to be too fond of the ease and quiet of their own room. It is to fail in charity not to come out and rescue from the abyss our brethren who are crying for help."

At Le Puy the enthusiasm with which his proposal was received by the Chapter, and by the clergy generally, was not less ardent than at Viviers. The Bishop would have resigned his see in order to secure such a pastor for his flock; and, his desire increasing with the earnestness of the other's refusal, he threw himself at M. Olier's feet and implored him not to deny him a favour, the greatest that could be conferred upon him. Nor was it until the holy man, astonished and confused, protested his unworthiness in the most moving terms, and declared that no considerations whatever could change his resolution never to accept an office which demanded virtues so exalted and supernatural light of so high an order, that the Bishop ceased to urge his request. M. Olier, before quitting Le Velay, had established clerical conferences at Le Puy after the model of those of St. Lazare. The ecclesiastics there now invited him to re-animate their flagging zeal, and many offered themselves with such alacrity for the labours of the mission that he felt convinced that the moment had arrived for commencing operations. "I have found," he wrote to M. de Bretonvilliers, "a wonderful fervour among the Canons here in favour of the missions. You would not believe what an amount of light this journey of mine has obtained me from God respecting this great work. O my very dear brother and child, of what importance it is to provide means for

forming subjects devoted to the service of Jesus, whom we can send into these abandoned places! Never let us be reproached with leaving these regions — whole provinces — to perish because we would not receive labourers into our houses. Our Lord will demand an account of our temporal goods and, above all, of the spiritual graces which He has so liberally offered to us. O my son, do your utmost to this end with Monsieur your brother. If I go to Paris I will myself speak to him; for he must be saved, and saved magnificently, by making him co-operate in saving thousands of souls. Ah! my son, if Jesus counted His Blood as nothing for our sakes, shall our goods, which are but the dust and ashes of the earth, be anything to us when it is question of mingling them with His divine treasures that we may co-operate with Him for the salvation of so many souls?" To this appeal M. de Bretonvilliers generously responded by praying to be allowed to offer, not only his goods but his person and his life also, if they could be of use; declaring that as to any share he might have in the merit of the enterprise, he prayed God to place it to M. Olier's account, for that it was his wish that to him should accrue all the grace of it in this life and all the glory of it in the other.

Another priest of St. Sulpice, who contributed largely towards this important mission, was M. de Queylus, whom M. Olier had sent, as we have seen, to establish a seminary at Viviers. The first object was the evangelisation of the large towns occupied by Protestants, who exercised a powerful influence among the neighbouring populations. Privas, situate in a country intersected with numerous deep valleys and in the midst of thickly scattered villages, had become one of the strongholds of the Huguenots. It had stood a desperate siege, conducted by Louis XIII. and Cardinal de Richelieu in person, in which 25,000 men had been engaged and many officers of mark had perished. Compelled to yield to overwhelming force, the people had shown themselves none the less, perhaps all the more, strongly attached to their errors, and there were now but forty Catholic inhabitants. This stronghold once gained, the adjacent places, it was hoped, would yield a comparatively easy victory; and M. de Queylus was commissioned to inaugurate the campaign by taking on himself the spiritual charge of the town. He was made Curé of Privas. The appointment was hailed with lively satisfaction, which was shared even by the Protestants themselves, who had already, during his residence in the province,

learned to regard him with esteem and admiration. His very acceptance of such a charge tended further to conciliate their respect and confidence. For that a man of high birth and independent means, who was also Abbé of Loc-Dieu, should be willing to enter on a field of labour so unattractive in itself and one which offered no compensating advantages, seemed to them a mark of extraordinary disinterestedness and zeal. He was accompanied by another priest of St. Sulpice selected by M. Olier, and, under his directions; preparations were at once made for opening schools in which the children of the place might receive a gratuitous education. The Protestant ministers, however, took the alarm, and wrought with so much effect on the prejudices of the people that no suitable building could be obtained for the purpose. Six months elapsed before one of the chief persons of the town had the courage to disregard the denunciations of the dominant powers so far as to let his own house to the Catholic missionaries.

Meanwhile active operations had commenced, with the aid of four additional ecclesiastics from the Seminary, the Lyonnese auxiliaries, and an ardent band of preachers who volunteered from various quarters. All the usual resources of a mission were brought into play: sermons and catechisings, public instructions and private conferences; but these were accompanied or, rather, pervaded, with that without which arguments are weak and instructions profitless, a winning sweetness and charity towards all men and the constraining example of an irreproachable life. Soon the little flock of forty had increased to more than three hundred souls; the church began to be filled, not only with auditors, but with worshippers; the sacraments, which had been to many from childhood the objects of contempt and abhorrence, were now frequented with a compunction and a devotion most touching to witness; the God Incarnate, who for years had been denied all public recognition, and had lain concealed even from the eye of His faithful few in obscurity and dishonour, was reinstated on His throne and reposed once more within His tabernacle; nor was it long before a Calvinist conventicle was consecrated to Catholic use amidst the sobs and tears of crowds who remembered with what blasphemies its walls had resounded against the Lord of glory in the Mystery of His Love. Nay, so rapid and complete was the change which came over men's minds that on the feast of Corpus Christi the Blessed Sacrament was borne in triumph through the streets, with all the pomp which the circumstances

of the case allowed. The oldest inhabitant of Privas had never before beheld a procession or other public ceremony of the Church, —although St. John Francis Regis had once preached a mission there and converted many Huguenots,—and now in a town which for more than sixty years, previous to its capture by Louis XIII., had not tolerated so much as the presence of a priest within its walls, there walked in open day no less than thirty ministers of the once proscribed religion, vested in surplices, preceding the Most Holy amidst the smoke of swinging censers and the sound of many instruments of music. More than 5,000 persons, attracted from all parts, assisted at the solemnity; the utmost decorum and respect was observed by the populace along the whole line of march; and from that day the procession was annually renewed without giving occasion either to profanation or disturbance.

A victory so glorious (it scarcely need be said) had not been gained without great conflicts and the endurance of many insults and many acts of violence on the part of the sectaries. The converts were treated as apostates and traitors, furious outcries were raised against them, and they were threatened with having their houses burned over their heads and themselves left perforce to perish in the flames. These, however, were but the acts of individuals; no popular commotion was excited; and the rage and violence that displayed itself only served to exhibit in brighter colours the patience and constancy of those who were the objects of attack. A touching incident is recorded of a young girl who, when her father had in his anger turned her out of doors because she had become a Catholic, uttered no complaint but, throwing herself at his feet, meekly besought his blessing.

Among the priests whom M. Olier despatched to the aid of M. de Queylus, was M. Jean-Pierre Couderc, son of a Counsellor of the Parliament of Toulouse and brother of the Superior of the community at Magnac. He had not as yet received holy orders when he was sent to take charge of the schools of the town, and he proved, as the servant of God had anticipated, to possess popular talents of the highest order. It was his custom to station himself near some Protestant conventicle, and, as the people came out from the preaching, he would mount upon a bench and refute the arguments to which they had just been listening, in language so felicitous and with a flow of eloquence so natural and simple that the crowds which thronged about him could not refrain from testifying their admira-

tion. Great numbers of Huguenots, among whom were several ministers of the sect, were converted through his efforts; and so indisputable were his powers and so signal his success that the very members of the Consistory shrank from meeting him in public disputation. Indeed, on one occasion, the Assembly was dissolved and its members took to flight on being challenged by M. Couderc to prove, from their own Bible, the truth of their doctrine that the Scriptures contained all that was necessary to be believed, and professed to do so. His gift of controversy was so remarkable and the influence he exercised on the populations so salutary that, even when he was superior of the Seminary of Viviers, he was authorized by M. Tronson to repair to any town in the diocese where the Protestant ministers were holding a synod, and oppose to their false and pernicious teachings the true doctrines of the Christian faith. This he continued to do, literally, to the day of his death, for he died while engaged in one of these charitable labours. The result is evident in the fact that Protestantism, which had held almost exclusive sway at Privas, soon numbered but a thirtieth part of the inhabitants among its adherents.

Under the direction of M. Olier, troops of missionaries passed from town to town, who in five years changed the whole aspect of the diocese. Wherever the pure faith was preached by men filled with the Spirit of God prodigies of grace followed, and it seemed as if they had but to show themselves in places where Protestantism most prevailed to see the partisans of error become transformed into ardent children of Holy Church. At Jaujac the houses were closed as long as the mission lasted, and the inhabitants spent the entire day in the church, listening to instructions, praying before the Tabernacle, or preparing themselves for a general confession. At Viviers the piety of the people led them to forego, of their own accord, all the gaieties of the carnival. Everywhere the grace of God descended in copious showers: sinners were converted, feuds were healed, wrongs redressed, injustices repaired. Nor were the effects of the revival of a transitory character. At Thueyts, a town which had been notorious for the irreligiousness of its population, so fervent was the devotion of the inhabitants three years after the departure of the missionaries, that on Sundays and festivals there were not priests enough to hear the confessions of the multitudes who desired to approach the sacraments; and M. de Bretonvilliers, writing from Le Vivarais at a later date, declares, on the authority

of a doctor of the Sorbonne resident in the place, that no one who had known them in their former condition would have believed them to be the same people. And these instances are given as only particular exemplifications of a great general result.

During his stay at Le Puy M. Olier had desired to see a house set apart for the instruction of children confided to his clergy by their Protestant parents, and as a place of refuge for such as were driven from their homes by their relatives on embracing the Catholic faith. With this view he established an association of the Blessed Sacrament on the model of that at Paris, and this was the beginning of the numerous institutions for the same object which were subsequently founded in different parts of France. It was a work which he had specially at heart. Writing to M. de Saint-Antoine, who had asked whether a sum of money which he had left at Le Puy might be applied to this purpose, the servant of God replied, "Not only that, but everything I have in the world; and if my blood could be of any avail, I would drain it to the last drop."

This mission occupied M. Olier for the five remaining years of his life, and was continued by his successors at St. Sulpice with unabated zeal. But he did not confine his labours to the diocese of Viviers; other dioceses were similarly blessed. Thus he caused a mission to be preached in the town of Alais, where he purchased a house with the view of eventually founding a seminary, a design which was warmly encouraged by the Bishop of Nîmes, under whose jurisdiction Alais then was. He left there two Sulpicians, M. Fuselier and M. Jean-Baptiste Macé, who (as we have seen) were subsequently transferred to Viviers; but of the result of the enterprise no record remains. One thing there was in the Cévennes which deeply grieved the heart of God's servant—the desolate state of numerous churches which the heretics had left in ruins and had forcibly prevented being restored. Fain would he have rebuilt them all, but towards the reconstruction of many he largely contributed; as, for instance, those of Bazainville and Clisson, which were restored with the help of funds which he generously furnished.

Allusion has been made in the course of this history to the part taken by M. Olier in the foundation of the Colony and Seminary of Montréal in Canada. The circumstances under which it was undertaken are no less extraordinary than those with which so many of his pious enterprises were attended. His soul was filled with grief

and shame that, while commerce had its numerous associations, all busily engaged in extracting from the natives whatever could minister to wealth and luxury, so little had been done or even attempted towards supplying them in exchange with the infinitely more precious treasures of the faith; and in 1634, but for the intervention of P. de Condren, he would himself have crossed the Atlantic and hastened to their succour. Burning, however, with the desire of co-operating in so noble an enterprise, he resolved to found a company devoted solely to the salvation of these poor abandoned creatures. Quebec was at too great a distance for the savages of Upper Canada to come as far for the purpose of trading, and their conversion was in consequence indefinitely delayed. He, therefore, formed the design of founding on the Island of Montréal a settlement which should be at once a nucleus of missions, a barrier against the incursions of hostile tribes, and a centre of commerce to the neighbouring populations. While he was meditating on the execution of this design God inspired a gentleman of La Flèche in Anjou with the same holy thought. This was Jérôme Le Royer de la Dauversière, a married man, but one who to great detachment from the world and constancy in prayer united an ardent love of mortification. He conceived the idea of founding a community of Sœurs Hospitalières with the view of planting a colony in the Island of Montréal, then nothing but an uninhabited desert. With the permission of his director he repaired to Paris, and, being in the gallery of the old château of Meudon, whither he had gone for the purpose of obtaining the necessary authorization from the Keeper of the Seals, an ecclesiastic entered whom he had never seen before. The two looked at each other for a moment, and the next, urged by an uncontrollable impulse, they had thrown themselves into one another's arms, and each was calling the other by his name with every demonstration of the tenderest affection. It was the mutual attraction of two holy souls given to God, and, though strangers in this world, united in the Heart of His Divine Son, and recognising each other with the instinct of a supernatural love,—like as we read of St. Paul the first Hermit and St. Anthony Abbot. M. Olier—for that the stranger was he the reader does not need to be informed—congratulated M. de la Dauversière on the object for which he had come, and, putting into his hand a *rouleau* of 100 louis d'or, said, "Monsieur, I wish to go shares with you." He then celebrated Mass, at which the other communicated; after which they walked in the grounds about the

château discussing for three hours the particulars of the plan, and, finding themselves perfectly in accord, they were the more convinced that it was the will of God that they should labour in common for the object they had both so closely at heart.

An association was at once formed, afterwards known under the name of the Society of Our Lady of Montréal. M. de Lauzon, Intendant of Dauphiné, made over to M. de la Dauversière the Island of Montréal, which had been bestowed upon him by the great Canadian Company, with the condition of his founding a colony there; and M. de la Dauversière, in his turn, transferred the grant to M. Olier and the other members of the association. By the end of 1640 the transaction was concluded and the society legally incorporated. In the articles of association, drawn up, as it would appear, by M. Olier in concert with M. de la Dauversière, who in his humility would assume no title but that of Procurator, the members undertook to send to Montréal, in the course of the ensuing year, forty well-conditioned men, provided with everything necessary for erecting buildings and fortifying them, who for the first year should employ themselves in breaking up the ground and preparing it for cultivation; for which end the associates should from year to year send out additional labourers, according to their means, with oxen in such proportion as should be needed for agricultural operations. At the expiration of five years, without intermitting the said operations, they should erect a seminary, or college, for the instruction of male savages, young and old; for which purpose there should ever be maintained in the house ten or twelve ecclesiastics, of whom three or four should instruct the missionaries, as they arrived, in the languages of the country; the missionaries themselves to spend a year in learning the said languages, and then go forth to labour among the savage tribes, as should be judged expedient; the rest should instruct the children of the savages and of the French inhabitants. There should also be a seminary of religious women to instruct females, both savage and French, and a hospital for the former when they were sick. In fine, all things else provided, houses should be built wherein to lodge a certain number of French families, the necessary workmen, young married people who had been educated at the seminaries, and other converted savages who might wish to remain; to these last should be given lands that had been put in order, grain for sowing, tools, and teachers to instruct them how to till the ground. Through these means

the associates hoped, by the goodness of God, to behold in a short time a new Church created, which should rival in purity and charity the Church of primitive times. They hoped also that, eventually, they and their successors, when well established on the Island, would cross over to the mainland, and form fresh settlements there both for the general advantage of the country and for the readier conversion of the savage tribes.

The two promoters of this great enterprise had already despatched twenty tons of provisions and other necessaries for the use of the colonists; and in the following year they collected together about thirty families who, out of a charitable zeal for souls rather than from a motive of self-interest, were willing to encounter hardship and peril among a rude and barbarous people. Among them were not only tradesmen, artisans, agricultural labourers, but men of gentle birth, and yet there was still wanting a person of experience and authority who might be placed at their head. M. Olier and his colleague had made this desideratum the continual subject of their prayers when M. Paul de Chaumedy de Maisonneuve presented himself, one who from his youth had been practised in the profession of arms and was wholly devoted to the interests of religion. But still another want had to be supplied: there was need of a woman, courageous and self-sacrificing, who would give herself, her life, to the assiduous tending of the sick; and almost at the same time such a one was found in the person of that heroine of charity, Mlle. Manse, of whom mention has been before made in this history, and who, after conferring with M. Olier and Marie Rousseau, repaired to La Rochelle, where the party were to embark; and there she first made the acquaintance of M. de la Dauversière, in whom she found a spirit and a heart in perfect unison with her own.

Towards the end of June, 1641, they set sail in two several vessels and, arriving happily at Quebec, there passed the winter. The fortunes of this far-famed missionary settlement do not fall within the scope of this narrative;* it must be sufficient to describe briefly the share taken by M. Olier and the Sulpicians in its formation and support. While the little band of emigrants were staying at Quebec, awaiting the return of spring, the servant of God, who was then at Vaugirard laying the foundations of the future Seminary, conceived

* A complete history of the colony from 1598 to 1676 was published by the Abbé Faillon in three volumes, entitled *Histoire de la Colonie Française en Canada.* It is a work of laborious research.

the pious idea of consecrating the Island of Montréal to the Holy Family, and placing it under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, by whose sweet name the town which was to be erected should be called. This accordingly he did, in the month of February, 1642, at the church of Notre Dame, where all the members of the association were assembled. Proceeding thence to the Hotel de Lauzon, they agreed to charter at least three vessels in addition, freighted with families selected with a special view to promoting the objects of the mission; and, every one generously contributing of his means, a sum of more than 200,000 livres was collected on the spot.

On May 17th, 1642, the little band that had wintered at Quebec reached Montréal. On landing they all knelt down upon the shore and, in a transport of pious joy, intoned Psalms of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. On the morrow the Holy Sacrifice was offered by P. Pimont, the Jesuit Father who had accompanied them from Quebec, and the Blessed Sacrament exposed to obtain a blessing from Heaven on the great enterprise thus prosperously begun. A rude hut, constructed of the bark of trees, formed the humble sanctuary in which the Incarnate Lord of heaven and earth took up His first abode, and from that moment to the present He has never left the town which from His Virgin Mother is called Ville Marie. The island furnishing neither oil nor wax, they were fain to have recourse to the expedient of placing before the Sacred Tabernacle, in a globe of glass, fireflies numerous enough to emit a light equal to that of several tapers.

Such were the beginnings of what is now the city of Montréal. If M. Olier could have had his heart's desire, he would have left France for ever and joined the missionary troop; and it required all the authority which P. de Condren possessed with him to divert him from his purpose. But, though prevented from gratifying his holy passion, he never relaxed his efforts in behalf of the mission and, indeed, it was long before he abandoned the design of going himself in person to its aid; and aid was imperatively needed, for the situation was one of peril and disaster. The Iroquois, who were cannibals and the most ferocious of the native tribes, kept up an almost incessant assault upon the settlement, which had been hurriedly surrounded with a hedge of stakes; many of the inhabitants were surprised and killed, houses burned, and the hospital itself exposed to constant danger of attack. Added to which was a dearth of food; for during the first ten or twelve years the land

yielded scarcely any produce, the colonists having no experience of the climate and being continually harassed by their savage neighbours. So desperate at length became the state of things, and so great was the discouragement which prevailed, that M. de Maisonneuve returned to France for the purpose of obtaining reinforcements. In this he was successful; more than a hundred men, strong and vigorous and well versed in the practice of war, eagerly volunteering for a service as glorious as it was arduous; and, closely following on them, went one who was a host in herself—Marguerite Bourgeois, a woman of an indomitable spirit and intrepid courage, or, rather, we should say one who was possessed with a spirit and a courage which only the grace of God could give. "I said within myself," she wrote to M. Tronson, "if it is the will of God that I should go to Canada, I have need of nothing; and so I went, without a penny, without a farthing, having nothing but a little bundle which I could carry under my arm." It was in the year 1653 that this heroic woman arrived at Montréal, which then consisted of some hundred houses, scattered here and there about the island, and a few huts erected on the mainland, which had scarcely yet been subjected to tillage. Her days were spent in instructing the children and the ignorant, visiting and serving the sick, consoling the distressed, washing the linen and mending the clothes both of the people and of the soldiers,—in short, stripping herself of everything to succour the poor and needy. And when the population so increased that she was no longer able to supply their wants unaided, she crossed the sea again and again seeking recruits, and, although she could promise them nothing save privation and suffering, she succeeded in forming a numerous community of devoted women, which has continued to this day.

Another object which M. Olier proposed to himself, as essential to the consolidation of the settlement and the success of his holy enterprise, was the establishment of an Episcopal see at Montréal. To evangelize a barbarous people, so widely scattered and consisting of mutually hostile tribes, many labourers, animated with a zeal of no common kind, were needed, and, as a sufficient number was not to be found in France who were willing to encounter the hardships and perils which such a venture involved, he believed that the only resource was to form them in the country itself; and for this were required the presence and authority of a Bishop. P. Le Gauffre, P. Bernard's successor, had been designated for the office,

but, ere anything could be accomplished, God had called him to Himself. Desirous, however, of co-operating after his death in a work of such paramount importance, he bequeathed by will a sum of 10,000 livres towards the endowment of a bishopric and chapter. The association laid the matter formally before the General Assembly of the Clergy, and a deputation was nominated for obtaining the sanction of the Queen Regent, preparatory to communicating with the Sovereign Pontiff; but the troubles of the Fronde interposed to prevent the execution of the plan. No sooner, however, was peace restored than the association renewed its appeal, engaging, on its part, not only to defray all expenses, but to deliver up to the Bishop and Chapter possession of half the island, with all seignorial rights and the lands already prepared for cultivation. The only difficulty lay in the choice of a person duly qualified to fill the see, but the Bishop of Vence was able to announce to the General Assembly that one had been found in the person of an ecclesiastic of St. Sulpice, whom he described in the following terms: "He is an Abbé who is willing to go among these savages at the sacrifice of himself and of all he has in the world. I cannot at present mention him by name, but I can assure this assembly that he is possessed of all those qualities of prudence, capacity, and zeal which are indispensable to one who would found a Church among the heathen. For many years he has laboured in the dioceses of Languedoc with most abundant fruit, and there is every ground to hope that God will bless his efforts." The person thus recommended was M. de Queylus, one of the first associates of the Society of Our Lady of Montréal. In the session of January 10th, 1657, the nomination was unanimously approved, and the matter was so far concluded that it awaited only the royal assent, when an unexpected opposition arose on the part of certain influential persons, and the project of a Canadian bishopric was indefinitely postponed.

But, nothing daunted by this ill success, M. Olier resolved to prosecute his intention of founding a community of missionaries, the necessity of which was now more than ever apparent. Accordingly, in this same year, 1657, he appointed M. de Queylus Superior of the Community of Montréal* and associated with him three others of his priests, M. Gabriel Souart, who was destined to be the

* M. de Queylus returned to France, and in 1672 succeeded M. Pierre Couderc as Superior of the Community of Mont Valérien.

first Curé of Ville Marie, M. Galinier, and M. d'Allet, the last of whom occupied the post of Secretary to M. de Queylus, who was himself made Vicar-General of Canada. When M. Olier broached the subject of the mission to his community they all unanimously offered themselves for the service, and one of them in particular, M. Le Maitre, declared, in the enthusiasm of his zeal, that he was ready to scour the country in search of converts and to follow the savages into their remotest haunts. "There will be no need of that," replied the man of God; "they will come to look for you, and will so throng about you that you will not be able to escape out of their hands." This prediction was only too fatally fulfilled. Two years after M. Olier's death M. Le Maitre was sent to Ville Marie, and on August 29th, 1661, being the feast of the Beheading of St. John Baptist, when he had just said Mass and the servants of the house were engaged in getting in the harvest, a band of savages, who had lain in ambush, burst in upon him and, cutting off his head, carried it away in a handkerchief. Strange to say, when this handkerchief was next seen by persons of credit who had been taken captive by the tribe, it bore imprinted on it an exact portrait of the martyr's countenance,—not, as might have been supposed, in lines of blood, but as though it had been traced with purest wax. The savages themselves, observing the prodigy, were struck with fear, and sold it to some English settlers, at the same time threatening to massacre them if they parted with it to the Catholics. Of this interesting relic no further record remains; but it is consoling to know that the man who did the murderous deed was subsequently converted to the faith, and made a truly Christian death in the Sulpician house at Ville Marie. The end of another missionary priest, M. Vignal, was attended with circumstances of peculiar horror. He was steward of the Seminary, and, going, in pursuance of the duties of his office, with sundry workmen, to the Isle-la-Pierre, he was seized and slain by the savages, who roasted and ate his flesh.

Owing to the death of its most opulent members and the withdrawal of others, the Society of Our Lady of Montréal, after twenty years spent in clearing the land and peopling the country, found itself reduced to great straits, being well-nigh destitute of resources and burdened with an enormous debt which it saw no prospect of being ever able to liquidate. Under these circumstances, the associates, considering that the work in which they were engaged owed its commencement to the piety and zeal of M. Olier, and that he

had confidently assured them that it would have a successful issue, resolved to make over the whole island of Montréal to the priests of St. Sulpice, who for thirteen years had, almost unaided, sustained the colony by their liberality and sacrifices, and for the last six years had been established at Ville Marie in community. This accordingly was done, and the contract signed on March 9th, 1663. The donation, however, was accompanied with two conditions of no light moment: 1. the Sulpicians were to charge themselves with all the liabilities of the Society, which amounted to 130,000 livres; 2. they were to bind themselves never to separate either the domain or the proprietorship of the island from the Seminary on any account or on any plea whatever. The liabilities were at once discharged by M. de Bretonvilliers out of his private means; but the second condition entailed more onerous consequences. For, while they were precluded from selling or alienating any portion of the territory, they were obliged, in the interests of the colony, not only to maintain the original domain in its integrity, but even to extend its limits; and this involved such large and continual disbursements that, but for the generous benefactions of M. de Bretonvilliers, M. de Queylus, M. du Bois, and others, they must have succumbed beneath the burden. After the death of M. de Bretonvilliers, who alone had furnished near upon 400,000 livres, M. Colbert, Minister of Finance, justly appreciating the vast services which the priests of St. Sulpice had rendered to the colony, obtained from Louis XIV., in 1678, an annual subsidy of 2000 crowns to assist them in meeting the expenses of its maintenance.

But, notwithstanding this substantial aid, the revenues of the Parisian Seminary were, for well-nigh a century, heavily taxed for the support of the colony of Montréal, the Community having, in the course of fifty years, expended in its behalf no less than four or five million livres, without receiving in return any compensation whatsoever. True it is that, by the terms of their contract with the Society of Our Lady, they were bound to employ in the interests of the settlement only such proceeds as they derived from the lands which were already cleared when they entered into possession,—there being an express agreement to the effect that, in regard to any fresh acquisitions or improvements they might make, they were free to dispose of them according to their pleasure,—but it would have been impossible for them to fulfil the objects for which the colony had been founded if they had availed themselves of this favourable

clause, seeing that in 1663 the lands that had been cleared scarcely yielded more than a hundred crowns. In order to maintain the seminary, the Superiors of St. Sulpice were obliged to send to Montréal only such ecclesiastics as were able to pay for their own lodging and support, and many also employed their private means in providing for poor families and relieving the necessitous. Conduct so disinterested could not fail to draw down the blessing of Heaven on their labours: by degrees the whole island was reclaimed and tilled, fresh bands of emigrants were received and housed, the value of the lands was raised, parishes were constituted, churches built, and divers missions established for the evangelization of the natives. So prudently and so ably was the whole territory administered, and so strictly in accordance with Christian principles, that Charlevoix, in his *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, says that in habitual order and regularity the population resembled a religious community; and the biographer of M. de Laval, first Bishop of Quebec (1675),* deposes that for a long time so perfect was the amity and unity which prevailed among the people of Montréal that, like the first Christian converts, they seemed to possess all things in common; and this, he adds, "is still the case in country places: everywhere the stranger finds a hospitable welcome, no door is fastened night or day, and this confidence is never abused." In 1714 Louis XIV., in consideration of the large sums of money they had expended in the establishment, augmentation, and conservation of the colony, relieved the Sulpicians of all seignorial charges; and in 1836 Gregory XVI. erected Montréal into an episcopal see.

Thus the work commenced by M. Olier with the Divine sanction, and maintained at so many sacrifices by his successors, was not allowed to come to nought. The Seminary of Ville Marie has continued to subsist down to the present day; and when Canada came into the possession of England an arrangement was made with the British Government by which the Sulpicians were enabled to retain their house and property, on condition that the Seminary of Montréal,

* François de Montmorency-Laval, son of Hugues de Montmorency-Laval; born in 1622; made Archdeacon of Evreux in 1648. He relinquished his office in 1653 to go on the foreign missions, when he was consecrated Bishop of Petræa *in partibus* and made Vicar-Apostolic of Canada. In 1659 he embarked for that colony, and became Bishop of Quebec in 1675. In 1685 he resigned his see, but remained at Quebec, where he died in 1708. He was remarkable for his zeal and piety both as a missionary and as a bishop.

though still remaining one with the Seminary of the Faubourg St. Germain-lès-Paris, should be separated, in all that concerned its temporalities, from the parent society.* They, on their part, engaged to continue and maintain all the works and institutions of public utility to which they had hitherto devoted themselves: that is to say, the parochial services and ministrations of the Island; the Indian mission of the Lac des deux Montagnes; the Petit Séminaire, or College, of Montréal; the schools for children; and the care of orphans and the sick poor. The Grand Séminaire was founded in 1840.

* These rights were confirmed in "an ordinance to incorporate the ecclesiastics of the Seminary of St. Sulpice of Montréal, anno III. Victoriæ Reginæ, cap. xxx."

Conclusion.

CHAPTER I.

M. OLIER'S LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

THE last years of M. Olier's life were destined, in the inscrutable Providence of God, to be one continued series of physical and mental sufferings; the merits of this great soul were to be enhanced and perfected by heavy and painful crosses. Scarcely had he recovered from the dangerous illness which, in 1652, had obliged him to resign the charge of his parish, when he was visited by one of the most distressing disorders to which humanity is subject, that of the stone; and so unceasing were his sufferings that his friends, seeing the efforts it cost him to bear them in silence, were astonished at the perfect tranquillity of spirit he was able to maintain. No murmur or complaint escaped his lips; in the midst of the most racking pains he might be heard saying repeatedly, "Love, love, love!" and such was the sweetness and devotion with which the words were uttered, that the bystanders were moved to compunction and retired resolving to lead a more holy life. This malady was followed by two other ailments, less dangerous but hardly less afflicting. Enfeebled, however, as he was in body, his mind seemed to be only refreshed and fortified for renewed exertions; for it was during his subsequent convalescence that he organised the great mission of the Cévennes and laid the foundation of several seminaries, as narrated in the previous chapter.

From Le Puy he was summoned to Paris on a business which he calls the most delicate which our Blessed Lord had ever intrusted to him, and fraught with most important consequences to the cause of God. He refers to his endeavours to win to the faith our unhappy monarch, Charles II.; and it was then he seems to have held those conferences with the King of which mention has been made. In order to prosecute this affair, he would fain have remained awhile at Paris, instead of at once returning to the South, as he had intended

doing. But in the spring of 1654 he was called away to Blois, where there seemed to be good prospect of his being able to establish a common seminary for the dioceses of Orléans and Chartres; and, instead of going back to Paris and renewing his relations with the King, as he had hoped to do, his health, never quite restored, so utterly failed that by the advice of his physicians he was fain to prolong his absence and seek repose and quiet in the country. For this purpose he retired to a house belonging to Mme. Tronson at Le Péray, near Corbeil, where that pious lady tended him with a sort of religious care. Thence he went to Argenteuil,* near Paris, a celebrated place of pilgrimage, which attracted a large concourse of devout persons during the octave of the Ascension; but, fearing that people would be coming to confer with him, as usual, on their spiritual concerns, he resolved to leave the place. "They do not know how weak I am," he writes; "yet I cannot and ought not to deny myself, as I do not look so very ill."

He was at Verneuil when, at the beginning of July, the news reached him of the Bull of Innocent X. having been promulgated, condemning the five Jansenistic propositions, and he wrote immediately to M. de Bretonvilliers asking whether his presence was required at Paris, so little regard had he to his health when the interests of the Church were concerned. But on the physicians prohibiting his moving or taking part in any occupations, however slight, he was

* The object of this pilgrimage was to venerate a robe of our Saviour's which had been sent (such was the tradition) by Constantine, son of Irene, to Charlemagne, and had been presented by that monarch to the convent of Argenteuil, when his daughter Theodrada made her profession there. As a perpetual memorial of the fact, three strokes of a bell were sounded every day at half-past twelve at noon, that being the time at which the holy relic had arrived. This robe is known in history as *Cappa Salvatoris nostri inconsutilis*, or *Tunica Salvatoris inconsutilis*. The Abbé Chastelain, Canon of Paris, who examined it in 1672, describes it as being of a thick sort of crape, of the colour of a dead rose-leaf; and Robert du Mont, an old author, adds that it appears from written documents to have been made by the hands of the Blessed Virgin for the Infant Jesus. The pilgrimage was a favourite one, not only with the common people, but with the highest personages in the realm; St. Louis, Henry III., Louis XIII., Mary of Medicis, Anne of Austria, our own Mary of Modena, Cardinal Richelieu, and many others going to venerate the holy relic. It was anciently enclosed in a silver reliquary, but, on the Huguenots plundering the shrine, it was kept in one of wood, until, on October 22nd, 1680, Mlle. de Guise caused another of costly materials to be made for it. This precious relic is still preserved in the church of Argenteuil, and pilgrims continue to resort to it, especially on the feast of the Ascension.

forced to submit. His chief anxiety was caused by being prevented from pursuing the affair of Charles II., which had been suspended for some weeks. Writing to M. de Bretonvilliers from Péray, on July 19th, he says, "Mme. Tronson will tell you that I am not well, having continual paroxysms at night; and I beg you to communicate with M. de Sommerset (*sic*), * that he may let the King know, and inform him that, since I had the honour of seeing him, I have been taken ill, and have been ordered into the country, where I am still detained."

Seeing himself obliged to remain away from Paris, he had a strong desire to visit once more the shrine of Notre Dame des Ardilliers, where he had received so many favours, and this desire he was permitted to satisfy, although an inability to sleep and the excessive heat of the season obliged him to stop some days on the way. After trying the waters of several mineral springs, and staying for a short time at the houses of attached friends, who vied with each other in tendering him hospitality, he at length returned to Mme. Tronson's château at Le Péray, where he was seized with the malady which was to complete his sanctification and terminate his life.

Four or five months before, he had received what he recognised as a warning of the state to which he was to be reduced. He was on a journey in the country for a spiritual object, when a person who was seated with him in the carriage said to him, "Ere long, your condition will be such that you will be staying in the world as if you were no longer living in it;" to which he had replied, "I shall be content to be in whatever state God wills; I desire and wish for nothing else." During the very journey which he had now been taking, his heavenly Patroness had signified to him, by an interior voice, that a serious malady awaited him, and that he must return speedily to Paris. From that moment he was possessed with an ardent love of the cross, so that he was for ever speaking of the blessings it had brought into the world and the esteem we ought to have of it. In his fear lest the threatened blow should fall before he could reach Le Péray, he made all the haste his weakness permitted, and arrived, as he wished, before the 8th of September. On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, as well as on that of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, his devotion found its gratification in making little cradles in which the infant Mary was represented holding crosses in her hands, which she distributed among ecclesiastics according to the love she was supposed to bear them and the

* Edward, Marquis of Worcester.

excellence of the works which her Divine Son desired to perform through their ministry. He reproached himself for not having insisted sufficiently in his instructions and conferences at the Seminary on the love and reverence which is due to the Holy Cross, and resolved for the future to inculcate on all hearts a greater devotion to it.

The man of God was now ready for the protracted trial through which he was to pass. On the 26th of September, 1653, while alone in his room engaged in prayer, he was struck with paralysis, which deprived him of the use of the whole of his left side. His first thought was to offer himself to God, in union with Jesus Christ dying on Calvary, to meet death in such manner and at such time as should please the Divine Majesty. Having still the use of his right side, he knocked on the floor to attract attention, but no one heard him, and he lay as he was, adoring the Justice of God, and content to be abandoned by all, even at the moment of death, after the pattern of his Lord. At last, some one entering the room found him extended on the ground, incapable of moving, but with a tranquil smile upon his face. Being lifted up and laid upon a bed, he bore the violent remedies that were tried, not merely with patience but, as those who were present testified, with joy and even exultation. The senses, however, had no part in this joy; it was the pure effect of his ardent love for the adorable will of God and his entire abandonment of himself to Divine Providence. The treatment to which he was subjected was of the most cruel kind, and may not be inaptly compared to the torments inflicted by the savages of America on their captured foes. First he was cupped and scarified; lancets were then thrust deep into his shoulders; his limbs were not so far paralysed but that he was acutely sensitive to pain, and, as the surgeon gave him no intimation of what he was about to do, he made an involuntary start, and said mildly, "I had better have been warned; one is not so much startled when one expects it." Accordingly, a priest who was present apprized him when the operator passed to the other shoulder, and the sufferer made no more movement than if he had been an indifferent spectator; not even a sigh escaped him. Apprehensive of a second seizure, whenever they saw an inclination to drowsiness out of his accustomed time for sleep, they began tormenting him anew, and plied him continually with nauseous medicines, for which he felt an extreme repugnance. Owing to his disabled state he could take only a spoonful at a time,

and was obliged to swallow drop by drop, thus adding indefinitely to the bitterness of the draught. But his patience remained unaltered; he smiled sweetly on all who brought him anything to take, bidding them not to spare him, but to administer whatever was prescribed by the physician. Unable to move, so much as to turn on his side, he had to be fed like a child: a state of helplessness which, far from adding to his affliction, was the source of a particular joy to this holy man, who with fervent acts of love adored the Infant Jesus, subject to all the feeblenesses of childhood and receiving in perfect obedience whatever was given Him by His Virgin Mother.

In about three weeks he was in a condition to be conveyed to Paris, where he could have the advantage of all the advice and attention which his case demanded. But the one desire of his heart was to suffer in union with Jesus. "So great was his love of the cross to which the hand of God had fastened him," says M. de Bretonvilliers, who, at the first news of his seizure, had hastened to visit him, "that I saw him shed tears once when he was told that he would recover." "I should be too happy," he said, when asked why he wept, "to remain on the cross for the remainder of my days, that I might make some return to our Lord, who suffered so much for me." The longer his sickness lasted the more did the spirit of self-annihilation increase within him. He regarded his bed as a cross on which he was to yield up his soul into the hands of his dear Master; and often he might be heard sighing and saying, "Ah! when will God give the last stroke to the victim? when will He give me the grace to consummate my sacrifice?" Incapable of making a continued meditation, he was nevertheless able, to the astonishment of every one, to keep himself in that interior disposition of a victim which it had been his endeavour to preserve all through life. It seemed as though, by a special gift of God, no effort was necessary to him; it was sufficient to abandon himself simply to the operations of the Lord Jesus dwelling in him. A thousand times a day would he adore the Divine Justice, ready to accept whatever crosses God might be pleased to lay upon him, so only that, while His justice afflicted him on the one hand, His goodness would uphold him on the other; "for without this," he said, "I should not be able to bear them." The peace of his soul showed itself so strikingly in the serenity of his countenance, that St. Vincent de Paul, coming to see him, remarked aside to the ecclesiastics who were present that it

was perfectly marvellous to see a man so full of joy under the crushing effects of such a malady.

But soon to his bodily affliction there was added an interior cross far heavier to bear. The light in his soul went out and he was left in utter darkness, bereft of all joy and consolation and tormented with a dread that he had lost the favour of God. He could no longer speak of divine things as heretofore, and in the sadness of his heart he would sometimes ask his confidential friends if they did not think that our Lord and His Blessed Mother had abandoned him. And yet, if any one had recourse to him for spiritual counsel, all his former gifts seemed to be at once restored. The same phenomenon had been remarked during his previous illness; and, on Mme. Tronson afterwards expressing her astonishment, M. Olier had replied, with a smile, that it was as if he had two heads, one of which was his own and was devoid of all capacity, the other given him by God for the service of his neighbour. So it was now in his paralytic state. The Queen Mother, who had shown him such frequent marks of confidence, testified the high esteem in which she held him by coming to see him at St. Sulpice. When she was gone, M. de Saint-Antoine, anxious to know how he had acquitted himself at the interview, asked him whether he had been able to hold any conversation with the Princess; to which he replied, with his wonted simplicity, "Our Lord gave me a little something to say, just to satisfy her." With the exception of these occasions, when for the benefit of some soul he recovered for the time the use of his senses and mental faculties, he could neither express himself nor attend to others speaking to him; and so great was the oppression which he suffered in his head that those about him apprehended a second attack of apoplexy.

Not only was he condemned to preserve an almost unbroken silence, but he was unable to apply his mind to anything external. All his occupation was within. He was ever conversing interiorly with Jesus, and the flames of divine love which devoured him were all the more vehement because they were allowed no outward vent. So rapid was the progress he made in sanctity and in the practice of the sublimest virtues that he was scarcely recognisable, says M. de Bretonvilliers, by those who were able to see something of what was passing in the depths of his soul. These revelations were truly marvellous. "It would take a volume," he adds, "to describe the lights which our Lord vouchsafed him respecting the Christian

virtues and mysteries as well as in the understanding of passages and figures in Holy Scripture." The thought of our Blessed Lord and His holy Mother was so habitually present to him that he seemed to have Them ever before his eyes. These interior visitations were renewed every day, and supported him in the state of utter weakness to which he was reduced. Such was the state of depression under which he laboured that one day, feeling how utterly incapable his lengthened illness rendered him, he complained in tender accents to his Divine Master, and entreated Him to restore him to health, if only it were for His glory, promising to employ it wholly in His service and that of His Church. At the same instant he beheld our Blessed Lord stooping and well-nigh bent down to earth under the weight of a heavy cross. The sight seemed to lend him supernatural strength and, rising from his seat, he prostrated himself on the ground as though at the very feet of Jesus bearing the wood of salvation; then, filled with shame and confusion, he bitterly reproached himself for his weakness and cowardice, and with a profusion of tears besought the Lord's forgiveness for the request he had made. From this moment he never allowed himself to desire either restoration to health or a diminution of his pains. On the contrary, it was his joy henceforth to see himself conformed to the sufferings of Jesus; and, the better to confirm himself in these dispositions, he had a picture made representing our Blessed Lord bending under the weight of His cross in the very manner he had seen Him. Nay, thinking that he did not suffer enough, and desiring to make some expiation for the weakness of which he had been guilty, he begged his doctor's permission to renew his accustomed mortifications, and to discipline his body on the side which was not affected with paralysis.

The Blessed Virgin, who at every epoch of his life had treated him as one of her best loved children, did not forget him in this extremity. Often, when some more than usually alarming symptom made its appearance, she would assure him that he had nothing to fear; at length, on the feast of her Purification, a day on which this compassionate Mother had been wont to bestow upon him some special mark of favour, it seemed as though she laid her hand lightly on his head, and from that moment his malady, which hitherto had only increased in violence, began to abate, and his head was so far relieved that he was able to resume some of his accustomed exercises. Although still incapable of saying Mass, he had the happiness of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, and every day he received his Lord

in the Blessed Eucharist, which was brought to him in his own chamber when he had not strength to go into the chapel, which was separated from it only by a door.

M. Olier profited by this slight alleviation to fulfil a vow which he had made at Le Péray, shortly before he was struck with paralysis, of paying eight visits annually to the church of Notre Dame. This was all that his enfeebled state of health permitted him to do; and he felt constrained to relinquish all the various affairs in which his zeal had led him to engage. It was now that he resigned the office which the Queen and Cardinal Barberini had induced him to assume in the government of the Cordeliers, at whose Provincial Chapter it would have been his business to preside this year with a view of determining certain grave differences which had arisen in that body. That he should thus resign into other hands the direction of the different institutions with which he was connected can be no matter of surprise; and the reader will therefore hardly be prepared to learn that M. Pierre Scarron, the Bishop of Grenoble, who was far advanced in years, chose this time, of all others, for petitioning the Queen, through St. Vincent de Paul, to appoint M. Olier his coadjutor; convinced that, in spite of his great infirmities, the diocese would derive no less benefit from the presence of such a pastor than from the active exertions of a more efficient man. It does not appear, however, that the Queen renewed her solicitations, or that M. Olier was even made aware of the Bishop's design.

In the spring of the year 1654 his condition was so far improved that his physicians again advised his having recourse to the waters of Bourbon. Although assured that his malady would never leave him but with death, he obeyed with all the simplicity of a child. During his journey, which he performed by easy stages, he never let a day pass without receiving the Holy Eucharist. As some of the inns at which he stayed the night were at a distance from a church, his friends would have had him sometimes abstain, but he replied, in tones that touched their very hearts, "Ah! deprive me of everything, so that you but leave me Holy Communion, the only consolation I have remaining." On one occasion, during a similar journey, he was left without this divine food, and through the whole day he remained in a state of depression and sadness. The next day his manner was altogether changed, and, as he was not subject to these variations, one of the ecclesiastics who were with him could not refrain from evincing his surprise. That morning M. Olier had communicated.

"How is it possible not to feel joy," he said, "when one possesses Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!" At Bourbon he obtained from the Capuchins a room in their monastery, close to the chapel, where he could hear Mass and communicate at such hours as suited him. On his way he went to see the Duchesse de Montmorency, who (as we have said) had retired to the Convent of the Visitation at Moulins. They had never met, but it may be remembered that the Duchess had applied to M. Olier for counsel and aid in the affair of Mlle. de Portes, and they now had an interview which lasted several hours and from which each derived great edification. On returning from the waters, he paid a second visit to the convent, when he took occasion to deliver a short address to the community; and, speaking afterwards with the Superioress in private, he congratulated her on having among her inmates this pious widow, whose very countenance bore the impress of holiness and inspired a respect quite different in kind from that which was socially due to her birth and rank. "Even now," he said, "we see and venerate in her traits of the sweetness and humility of that God-made-Man whose maxims she follows and with whose spirit she is animated." This eulogium of one who at the time was not even a postulant came to be regarded as a prediction of the exalted virtues to which the Duchess was to attain in a convent of which she was destined to become superioress, and where she died in the odour of sanctity.

From the waters of Bourbon M. Olier derived but little benefit; nevertheless, in obedience to the advice of his physicians, he returned to them later in this same year. Such relief as he was to experience emanated from another and a supernatural source. While at Moulins, being one Sunday (July 5th, 1654) in the church of the Augustinians, he made a vow for the future to hear Mass and, if the power were granted him, to say it for the intentions of the Blessed Virgin; from that day his health underwent a sensible change for the better. At Saint-Pourçain, where he also tarried on his way to the waters, he renewed his vow in the chapel of Notre Dame de Briailles;* and so pleasing to the Virgin Mother was this

* St. Pourçain, whose body still reposes in the town which bears his name, continues to be an object of veneration in those parts. The neighbouring village of Briailles possessed a miraculous image of Our Lady, which attracted numerous pilgrims to the spot, particularly on the Mondays in Easter and Whitsun weeks, and on the 16th of August. At the time of the Revolution the image was destroyed, and the place has since ceased to be frequented. The chapel is now a private dwelling.

pious act that she obtained for him a boon for which his soul longed, that of offering the Holy Sacrifice on the feast of her Nativity, after having been deprived of this privilege for little short of an entire year. But these were not the only favours which the Mother of God bestowed upon the child of her election at this time. During his stay at Moulins she bade him pay three visits to the collegiate church which bore her name. On the third day he beheld her descend from heaven in unspeakable majesty, and, embracing him, she said, "Henceforth you will be wholly mine." The sensible effects then wrought in his soul were, perhaps, the greatest which he had ever experienced. It seemed as if that word of the Lord was now accomplished which had been spoken to him at the beginning of his seizure: "When I have reigned over you by my Cross, I will reign in you by My Mother." It seemed, too, as if this grace was the fulfilment of the promise which the Blessed Virgin had made him three years before, when he was sighing and languishing to be wholly perfected in her: "You know not what my love is reserving for you." He must needs be purified by the cross before enjoying this intimate union with the Queen of Heaven. When the servant of God afterwards revealed to his confessor this priceless boon, which was the consummation of all his desires, his voice was well-nigh drowned in the tears which streamed from his eyes.

Towards the end of September he returned to Paris, far more satisfied with the interior graces with which his soul had been enriched than if he had come back from his journey in the most vigorous health. The hope with which he was now animated of being able to say Mass daily filled him with abundant joy; and, his love of Jesus in this august mystery overcoming his reluctance even to appear wanting in external respect, he obtained leave to celebrate with his head covered until the Canon, as otherwise he would have been unable to say Mass during winter. His state of infirmity prevented him from taking part in any religious ceremonies, but, on his return from Bourbon, in order to testify his respect for Père Yvan, who had died just after his first attack, he assisted at a solemn function which was performed in his friend's behalf; and this was probably the last occasion on which he made a public appearance in the church of St. Sulpice. During the three years that he survived, he was confined to his room all the winter months, unable to reach the chapel either for Mass or for Communion, but all this time he showed no more signs of weariness or regret at his forced inaction

than if his imprisonment and solitude had lasted but a day. His consolation lay in the simple thought that obedience was better than sacrifice: that in doing nothing, because God so willed, he was serving Him better and pleasing Him more than if he were laboriously employed, even though it were for the Divine glory and from the most pure intentions. Oftentimes he would say that what God was most jealous of on the part of His creature was its absolute dependence on His Providence. "For," he would add, "the devil not unfrequently deceives us with a show of piety, making us long for return of health in order that we may labour in the cause of God, when God desires to be glorified by our infirmities and sufferings. It is a snare of self-love, which under the pretext of doing good seeks to gratify itself with that which is agreeable to nature, instead of allowing itself to be led on to the pure love of God, who desires nothing but the accomplishment of His holy will."

God, it would seem, was pleased to put away from His servant whatever might prove the slightest hindrance to his perfect union with Himself, by inspiring him with a distaste for everything which might recreate or distract his mind. At times persons would suggest some little employments which would give light occupation for his hands; but, though he thanked them for their kindness, everything was a weariness to him which did not help to raise his heart to God; he could not pay it even a passing attention without a feeling of distress and pain. God, as he said to some of his most intimate friends, seemed to have fixed a cross for him on all created things, so that, if for a moment he sought to console himself with them, he was sure to find it. He was given a little bird, so tame that it would sit and eat on the table while he was taking his repast, and show its familiarity in a hundred pretty ways. Like St. John with his partridge, M. Olier was pleased with the little creature; but, some one having inadvertently opened the window, the bird flew out and never returned. His great love for the Holy Scriptures made him esteem it a particular happiness that God had left him the use of his eyesight at times when his malady permitted him to read. But, knowing that his sanctification was to be consummated by the loss of everything in which he took a pleasure, he one day said, "I have still this consolation left me; God will deprive me of it;" and, as he spoke, there was a smile on his lips, and his countenance wore an expression of peculiar contentment. If his friends took him for an airing into the country, it was observed that his mind appeared

preoccupied, and neither the fineness of the day nor the pleasant scenery could rouse him from his apathy. When his companions urged him to relax his mind a little, he replied, with a sweetness which had nothing of regretful sadness in it, "Our Lord does not let me take pleasure in anything; I must wait till I get to Paradise." Unable to occupy himself with prayer, or reading, or with anything which could afford his mind the least relief, and oppressed with a feeling of dryness and desolation, he would say, "It is the will of our Lord that I should find pleasure in nothing; I must be content, and submit to His appointments with a good heart." If it happened that through inadvertence he was left alone in his room, and it was suggested that he had better have sent for one of the Community, he would answer, "No; I must follow Jesus Christ, who never sought consolation on earth. If I happen to be left alone, I wait till our Lord puts it into some one's mind to come to me, for I ought not to call any one away from the service of so great a Master."

In this condition, constrained to pass one portion of the year in his chamber and to devote the other to trying the remedies prescribed, he regarded himself as a barren tree which deserved only to be rooted up, and would often say, with a smile, that he knew no one who had a head so useless as his. But none the less did he love the state he was in, as being ordered by God for his sanctification. On first resigning the charge of his parish, his intention had been to devote himself more completely to the work of the Seminary, which he desired to raise to the highest point of perfection. But now he abandoned all to the Divine pleasure, saying to those who expressed the regret they should feel at the work being left unfinished, that God in His own time would supply what was wanting; and adding that, much as he prized the Seminary for the object it was intended to fulfil, he should only rejoice at its destruction if thereby God were ever so little glorified. But, while by this complete despoilment the work of his sanctification was being perfected, and even when he seemed to be rendered powerless to do anything for God, the divine energy with which his soul was inspired gave him strength enough to engage in many important undertakings. Thus, although unable himself to take any further part in the great mission of the Cévennes, he used all his endeavours to encourage and promote it; and it was now, as we have seen, that at his instance the Seminary of Clermont was founded and a successful attempt made towards solidly establish-

ing the house at Montréal. Nor was his undying zeal thus satisfied; for, besides the pious pilgrimages which he made, as health permitted, to Notre Dame and other churches consecrated under the invocation of our Blessed Lady and the saints, he was never weary of rendering some act of homage to our Lord or some service to his neighbour. Next to his fervent communings with God, his dearest pleasure was to inspire the hearts of others with the same divine affections, and he possessed the enviable faculty of mingling with his pious discourses other and various topics which interested as much as they edified his visitors.

Every year until his death he went to Bourbon, and in the early part of 1655, conscious that his end was approaching, he desired for the last time to make the pilgrimage of Notre Dame du Puy.* It was that for which, of all the holy places in France, he felt the most attraction, as being the spot where he had been favoured with so many graces. He called to mind also the extraordinary marks of divine predilection which the Mère Agnès had there received, and gratefully remembered the part that had been assigned her in his conversion and vocation. So intense was his devotion, so close his union with God, that on more than one occasion he had to be admonished to withdraw and even, in a manner, to be removed by force from where he knelt absorbed in prayer. Unable to be always in the church, yet desirous of being ever so in spirit, he caused a silver statuette of himself to be made, in the attitude of a suppliant, and deposited at the feet of his beloved Mother. To this he added, before his departure, a rich medal of gold on which was represented the Seminary of St. Sulpice, conjuring her to take it under her special protection and to make all its inmates so many instruments for the glorification of her Divine Son. He remained at Le Puy about six weeks, during all which time he had the happiness of saying Mass in the cathedral

* This was one of the most celebrated shrines in France, and was frequented by such vast multitudes of people as on more than one occasion to lead to loss of life. The place is still the resort of numerous pilgrims, and a colossal bronze statue of our Blessed Lady, seventy-six feet high, was in 1860 erected on the rock called Rocher-Corneille, which stands 2,460 feet above the level of the sea. "It represents the Blessed Virgin crushing the serpent's head under her feet, while in her arms she bears the Divine Child, whose hand is raised as if in the act of blessing France, and by an episcopal ordinance the anniversary of its erection is to be kept in perpetuity on the first Sunday after the 12th of September." Northcote's *Celebrated Sanctuaries of the Madonna*, pp. 168, 169. In the same work will be found an account of the shrine of Notre Dame de Chartres.

every day except two, on which, however, he was not debarred receiving communion, a consolation which he regarded as one of the signal graces which were bestowed upon him in this place of benediction; for since his seizure he had never recovered sufficient use of his limbs to be able to offer the Holy Sacrifice so frequently. During his stay at Le Puy he lodged at the Episcopal palace, and, having to pass through the court on his way to the church, he never failed to distribute alms among the numerous beggars who gathered round him. Many a tongue blessed him as the father of the poor; and this was the title which greeted him wherever he went.

The order and fervour which he found prevailing in the Seminary of Le Puy were so grateful to his heart, that he desired to profit by his visit to place the establishment on a solid and permanent basis. As yet it had neither house of its own nor endowment, and he now obtained that it should be united to the parochial church of St. George, and caused himself to be nominated Curé, a title for which, ever since he had resigned his benefices, he seemed to have a particular esteem. In this church were preserved the relics of St. George, Apostle and first Bishop of Le Velay, together with those of St. Hilary of Poitiers; but they had ceased to be the objects of popular veneration until the servant of God, who took particular delight in restoring to His saints the honour which is their due, caused them to be formally authenticated and commended to the public devotion of the faithful. The Bishop of Le Puy presided at the ceremony, which took place in the presence of the clergy and judicial authorities of the town and a vast assemblage of people.*

* According to documents existing at the time, the relics of these two saints had been deposited 700 years before, under the altar of the church dedicated to St. George, by the then Bishop of Le Puy. Three hundred years afterwards they were again uncovered by the Bishop, and replaced as they were found. When the tomb was re-opened, at the instance of M. Olier, in 1655, a large coffin was found, divided into three parts. In the first part lay the bones of St. George, with a little marble tablet, on which were inscribed the words: "Here repose the bones of the glorious Saint George, first Bishop of Le Velay." In the second part was the body of St. Hilary, with the exception of the head, of which only a small portion remained. The bones were all black, as if charred with fire, the tradition at Poitiers being that the body of the great Bishop had been burned. They had been transferred to Le Puy for better security, during the wars of the middle ages, by a Count of Poitiers, brother of the Bishop of the former town. In the third division were the cloths in which the bodies had been found wrapped when the altar stones were removed 400 years before, together with a box enclosing a parchment, in which were described the circumstances of the opening and the state of the two

Before quitting Le Puy, M. Olier wished to testify his gratitude to all who had taken an interest in the establishment of the Seminary, and especially to the Nuns of the Visitation, who had rendered the directors so many kind offices that these, in their turn, had given them the benefit of their ministrations. M. Olier had approved their doing so, restricting them only from hearing the ordinary confessions of the community and preaching to them in public. When he went to take his leave and to thank the religious for their charity, the Superioress begged him to extend his permission and remove these restrictions. This he declined to do, giving as his reason that it would not be profitable to the community, inasmuch as the preacher might be tempted either to refrain from animadverting on their faults or to have recourse to a species of flattery for fear of scandalising people living in the world who might be present, and who would be apt in consequence to take a disparaging view of conventual life. As, however, she repeated her request four or five times in succession, and continued urging fresh pleas for a relaxation of his prohibition, he said, in a decided tone of voice, "My mother, I cannot permit what you ask of me; let us say no more on the subject, I pray." The Superioress then turned the conversation, and the interview terminated, apparently, with mutual satisfaction. The servant of God, however, was troubled at having answered, as he thought, rather warmly, and, to the surprise of the priests of the Seminary, who saw the state of excessive weakness to which he was reduced, he expressed a wish to pay the nuns another visit. But greater was the astonishment of the religious themselves, when this holy priest began to accuse himself in the most humble terms of the disedification he had caused them, by the manner in which he had refused a request with which he felt unable to comply.

Among other instances of his humility the following is related. A religious of Le Puy, in preaching to a community in that town, had inveighed in severest terms against certain ecclesiastics whom he did not otherwise designate, but whom his audience did not fail to recognise as the priests of the Seminary. The confessor of the

bodies at the time. A duplicate of this document had also been deposited in the archives of the church. At the request of the Chapter of Poitiers a bone of each saint was subsequently conveyed in solemn procession to the church of that town, where the precious relics are still an object of pious veneration. The portion of skull mentioned above was formally authenticated only a few years ago by M. de Bonald, Bishop of Le Puy, and is still preserved in the cathedral church.

monastery, who was their devoted friend, was filled with indignation, and scarcely allowed the preacher to leave the pulpit before he gave free expression to his feelings. "I said hardly anything," answered the other; "if I had given them their deserts, I should have said a great deal more:" a reply which only added fuel to the flames. At this juncture M. Olier visited Le Puy, and the confessor, going to see him, began eagerly to relate the whole circumstance, and to show how zealously he had taken the part of the Seminary. "Monsieur," said the holy man, "will you do what I am going to bid you?" "You have only to speak, to be obeyed," was the reply. "Then," said M. Olier, "go immediately and beg the good monk's pardon for the way in which you have treated him." A judgment so unexpected excited no small surprise, and the Père de Serres, Guardian of the Cordeliers, did not scruple to tell M. Olier that the preacher, so far from being the person to receive an apology, ought himself to have played the humble part and asked forgiveness. "My father," replied the man of God, "when we have made reparation for all the insults we have offered to the Divine Majesty, then we may think of demanding satisfaction for ourselves."

Another incident is recorded which testifies as well to his humility as to his spirit of meekness and forbearance. A daughter of the Vicomte de Polignac requested M. Olier to go and see her at the Convent of St. Catherine, where she was a nun. Her object in sending for him was to take him to task for having sided with the Bishop of Le Puy in a dispute that had arisen between that prelate and her father. The louder her complaints, the more subdued and humble became the good man's mien, who to all her reproaches answered not a word. On his return to the Seminary he deemed it prudent, for the guidance of the directors, to acquaint M. de Saint-Antoine with what had occurred; and this he did with the utmost tenderness and charity, adding that he had not liked to let the aggrieved lady know that the Vicomte de Polignac was a relative of his own.

On quitting Le Puy he passed through the village of Langeac, for the purpose of visiting, for the last time, the remains of the Mère Agnès. In this pilgrimage he was accompanied by MM. de Bretonvilliers, d'Hurtevent, de Lantages, and Le Breton. Already, in 1652, at the time of the establishment of the Seminary of Le Puy, he had, with permission of the ordinary, caused the tomb to be opened, and had possessed himself of a portion of her relics. He now obtained leave to transfer the holy body to a new and more suitable deposi-

tory. As he entered the inclosure, supporting himself with difficulty on his staff, he said with a smile to the Mère des Cinq-Plaies, then Prioress, "You see how I am: it is the Mère Agnès who has done me this good turn;" meaning that she had been faithful to her promise of obtaining crosses for him. On beholding once more the precious remains of one who was now in the company of Jesus and His saints, he experienced an interior joy far surpassing any he had felt during their converse together on earth; and, as he looked again on that right hand which had disciplined her body with such holy courage, his thirst for mortification and penance became more burning than ever. On leaving he bestowed numerous gifts upon the community, and, among the rest, a monstrance and a silver chalice, the latter of which is still religiously preserved among the treasures of the convent.

From Langeac the servant of God returned to Bourbon, and, having made a second sojourn at the waters, as prescribed by his physicians, again retired to his chamber at St. Sulpice. There he remained until the August of the following year, when he repaired again to Bourbon for the last time. During all those long months of solitude and suffering he applied himself, as strength permitted, to promote the glory of God by continuing the publication of his writings and holding pious conversations with those who came to visit him; his patience and perfect submission to the will of God creating a powerful impression on all who witnessed it. In the spring of 1656 he profited by the fine weather to perform two pilgrimages which he had promised to God: that of Notre Dame des Anges, near the château d'Avron, for which he had a particular devotion, and that of Ste. Fare,* in the diocese of Meaux. It was seldom that he was able to pay visits in Paris, his paralytic state preventing him, except with great difficulty, from reaching the apartments of those whom he wished to see. One day, however, being desirous to pay this civility to the Prior of the Carthusians, whose house was near, it was necessary to carry him from the coach to the Father's cell. A passer-by kindly lent his services, and the servant of God, observing that he seemed to be in want, inquired of the ecclesiastic who accompanied him whether he had any money about him, and, finding that he had a few crowns, he took one and

* The remains of this saint were preserved in the Abbey of Farremoutiers, a little village of La Brie. They are still the object of popular veneration, particularly on the 10th of May.

gave it to the man; and then, reflecting that the coachman had equally assisted, he asked for another crown and handed it to him, saying that as he had shared the trouble he was entitled to the same recompense. Even this little act of thoughtful kindness is worthy of mention, as showing the generous nature of the man and his tender regard for the feelings of others.

As his end approached it was observed that his thoughts ran constantly on the subject of the Resurrection, a mystery for which he had always felt a peculiar attraction. He had a picture of it hung up in his room, and one day, enfeebled as he was, he placed himself on his knees before it, and remained in that posture for a full hour absorbed in prayer. At last his attendant begged him not to fatigue himself any longer, and helped him to rise. "Ah!" replied the holy man, "how can one feel fatigue while contemplating this mystery?" From time to time he might be heard crying, "O dear Eternity, thou art not far off;" then, taking his own hand, he would add, "Body of sin, thou wilt soon be rottenness!" A priest, with the view of diverting his mind, once began telling him the news of the day, but M. Olier stopped him, saying, "This does not taste of Eternity." The one desire of his heart was to go and enjoy the presence of God. He often implored to be freed from the chains of the body; and on Easter Day, in particular, he earnestly besought the Holy Virgin to call him to herself, that with her and all the company of the blessed he might celebrate the Resurrection of her Divine Son in heaven. But it was God's will that he should suffer yet awhile, and he offered himself without ceasing as a victim desirous of living only in order to die a daily death on the cross to which he was fastened. "If I could produce as much fruit by suffering as by preaching," he once said, "I should prefer the way of suffering, because I should thereby give more to God." Indeed, his thirst for suffering seemed only to be equalled by his longing desire to behold the Face of God. One day that a dose was brought him, the very smell of which was enough to create disgust, he sipped it slowly, drop by drop, without betraying the least repugnance; and when some one expressed surprise at his doing so, he strove to disguise his act of mortification by replying that he did not know what it tasted like. If any one pitied his condition, he would say, "It is nothing; Jesus endured far more; and what happiness, what joy, to suffer something for love of Him!" His excessive weakness incapacitating him for continued application of the mind to God, it was necessary from time

to time to divert his thoughts to other things. He would try and second his friends' endeavours; but in a few moments, as though transported out of himself, he would renew his heavenly aspirations, which sometimes found their expression in such ejaculations as the following: "Oh, how faint and feeble is love on earth! how full it is of self-interest and self-seeking! O my God,—the misery of seeing oneself in such a state! Let us sigh for Heaven, the only place of true and solid love! O land of love, how dear art thou to the heart which longs to love! Thou alone canst satisfy the poor soul, which here below is stifled with its ardent desires of loving."

Yet, great as was the joy with which he contemplated the near approach of death, his tender consideration for the priests of his community had made him refrain from speaking of it. But, on the first day of Lent, 1657, when alone with M. de Bretonvilliers, he said, "We must make our preparations; for soon we shall see each other no more; at Easter we must part." He then designated that ecclesiastic as his successor in the government of the house, and every day held long conversations with him on the direction of seminaries, the spirit that ought to pervade them, and the rules necessary to be followed. M. de Bretonvilliers committed these instructions to writing, and it was from them that M. Tronson, in 1678, drew up the regulations for the use of superiors and directors of provincial seminaries.

Jesus dying naked on the cross, abandoned by all, was ever before his eyes; and the nearer he came to his last hour the stronger grew his desire to deprive himself of every human satisfaction, even of a spiritual kind. There was one friend from whose conversation he derived particular comfort, but for a month before his death he ceased asking him to come and see him. His friend felt the change, and inquired the cause. "My child," he answered, "I shall soon die; I wish, therefore, to strip myself of everything, and to have no longer any consolation in this world. I would look only to that which I hope for from the Divine Mercy in a blessed eternity."

Lent was drawing to a close, and the man of God, as was afterwards remembered, seemed to know that the hour of his departure was at hand. A person of distinction, who was under his direction, told him he wished to make his confession to him, and would choose such time as should be least inconvenient. "Let it be before Easter Sunday, then," he said. As another person, also

under his direction, was leaving the room, M. Olier turned and bade him farewell, at the same time giving him his blessing unperceived, a thing he was not in the habit of doing to visitors. On the morning of the 26th of March, being Monday in Holy Week, while getting out of bed, he was seized with a trembling in all his limbs, and had another paralytic stroke, without, however, losing consciousness. This was at Issy, to which place he had gone in order, as he said, to prepare for death; but it was deemed advisable to move him again to Paris. From this time it was observed that he had lost the recollection of almost everything except what related to God. On the Thursday, a person coming to see him, M. Olier received him with a more than usual tenderness of manner, and disclosed to him certain secrets of his conscience which he could have known only by an interior revelation. On the same day he gave some excellent instructions to one of the directors of the Seminary, both for his own guidance and for that of the house, exhorting him expressly never to act from motives of human prudence, but always in the simplicity of faith. He ended by saying that he died with the perfect assurance that God would preserve the Seminary, for that it was His own work, and he left it with confidence in the hands of the Blessed Virgin, who had ever shown herself its powerful protector. About the same time, when announcing his speedy departure, he bade certain of his ecclesiastics be prepared soon to follow him. M. Blanlo, hearing his beloved master ask who amongst those present wished to make the journey of eternity, answered blithely, "I do." "Then begin your preparation," said the holy man. That very day M. Blanlo was obliged to take to his bed, and he died before the servant of God was buried. Several others, who were located in different dioceses, followed in rapid succession, and under circumstances so remarkable that it was a general belief at St. Sulpice that their deaths were a special grace accorded to the prayers of God's servant, who, on quitting the world, desired to take with him before the throne of God a few choice members of his spiritual family.

On Holy Saturday some one begged M. Olier to remember him when he had entered into glory, and at the same time let fall some expressions of admiration. "Ah," replied the dying man in a tone of poignant sorrow, "what you say pierces me to the heart." These were the last words he ever uttered. Shortly after, it being nine o'clock in the morning, he suddenly lost the power of speech,

which he never after recovered. About noon he fell into a profound lethargy, and, as he had already received the Holy Viaticum, it was thought well not to defer giving him Extreme Unction. While it was being administered he regained perfect possession of his senses. It was a beautiful and touching sight to see him as he lay, the expression of his eyes, which were raised to heaven, and of his whole countenance showing the tranquillity which reigned in his soul and its entire absorption in the thought of God. In this extremity his zeal for the honour of Mary was still conspicuous; for, unable to speak, he intimated by signs, to one who stood near, his wish that the decorations of the chapel designed to illustrate her glories should be completed without delay.

During all that night his frequent stupors caused renewed alarm; but he returned to himself, and, seeing near his bed one who had always enjoyed his especial confidence, he embraced him affectionately, as though to bid him a last farewell. In the morning of Easter Day, when his dangerous condition became known, many of the parishioners came to see him, whom he silently greeted with looks of tender courtesy which betokened at once his gratitude for their charity and his own inward peace. But at three o'clock in the afternoon he again lost consciousness, so that, when visited shortly after by the Archbishop of Bourges, the Prince de Conti, and other persons of rank, he was not even aware of their presence in his chamber. However, he once more rallied and lay in the same state as before, still unable to articulate, till the next day, which was to be the last of his life. And now this saint-like man was to have the happiness of being conducted to the verge of eternity by one whom the Church with authoritative voice has pronounced to be a saint. St. Vincent de Paul, who had held frequent converse with him during his illness, on learning the state to which he was reduced, hastened to his succour, and it was under the eyes of this angel-guardian, to whose aid he had so often had recourse during life, that he rendered up his soul to its Creator, about a quarter past five in the afternoon, on Monday in Easter week, being the 2nd day of April, the feast of St. Francis of Paula. His biographer, M. Baudrand, declares that he retained his senses to the last, and that the loving transports of his soul never ceased till they found their perfect fruition in the bosom of God. M. Olier died aged forty-eight years, six months, and twelve days.

Abelly, in his Life of St. Vincent, testifies to the singular venera-

tion which that great apostle of charity entertained for the founder of St. Sulpice,* and Collet, another biographer, relates that the Saint, during the three years he survived, was in the constant habit of invoking him, as indeed he himself mentions in a letter addressed to M. Olier's niece, Mlle. d'Aubray, in July, 1660; that is to say, two months before he went to join his friend in the kingdom of eternal bliss. St. Vincent continued to maintain intimate relations with the priests of St. Sulpice after the death of M. Olier; and to M. de Bretonvilliers we are indebted for a fragment of the touching address which the Saint delivered with the view of comforting them in their bereavement and encouraging them to continue the work which their holy founder had begun. "Witnessing as I do, my dear brethren," he said, "the affliction in which you are plunged by the death of your beloved father, would that I could restore him to you and dry your tears. But, as I am unable to restore him to you alive in the body, I have thought that I ought to present to you his spirit, which is the better part of him. His body has been consigned to earth, Heaven has received his soul; his spirit is still yours; and, if God has judged him worthy of a place in Paradise with His angels, you ought not to deem him unworthy of a place in your hearts. Gladly will he have quitted his body, if his spirit can but dwell in you: this was all he desired, all he wished for during life; and now that he is dead you can satisfy his desire. It was said in the Law that if a man died without children, his brother should raise up seed to him.† Your father, whom, considering his age, I may also call your brother, is dead, so to say, without children, seeing the great desire he had of converting the whole world and sanctifying the clergy. He has bequeathed to you his spouse, this holy house, which he acquired by his blood, by his death, having died in his efforts to give it life. Raise up children to him, by publishing abroad the knowledge of Jesus, and obtaining for him, if possible, as many servants as there are men, and giving him as many holy sacrifices as there are priests in the Church. '*Fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est.*'" ‡

* The Abbé Faillon, at the end of his third volume, gives a chapter from Abelly's "*Life of St. Vincent de Paul*," not published in the work itself, on the relations that subsisted between the Saint and M. Olier.

† Deut. xxv. 5.

‡ "Make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount."—Exod. xxv. 40.

It was St. Vincent who presided at the assembly which was held, on the 13th of April, for the purpose of choosing M. Olier's successor. This he did in the name and by the authority of the Abbé de St. Germain, as ecclesiastical superior. But, as need hardly be said, there was no matter for deliberation; M. de Bretonvilliers, whom the servant of God had designated for the office, being elected at once and by a perfect unanimity of votes. St. Vincent, too, was the first to affix his signature to the act of election, which was drawn up and witnessed by the public notaries, as was customary at that time.

For three days the body of the holy man lay exposed to view, in his priestly vestments, in the chapel of the Seminary, where it was visited by crowds eager to satisfy their devotion and obtain the benefit of his prayers. Some might be seen kneeling at his feet, humbly recommending themselves to his remembrance; others soliciting or, without waiting to solicit, appropriating something that had belonged to him, or touching the venerated remains with their rosaries and medals. His countenance, as he lay, looked so beautiful and calm, that to the spectators it seemed as though he had but sunk into a gentle slumber. About the time of his departure the event was notified in a dream to a devout person, living at some distance from Paris, who had been united to the man of God in the bonds of a holy friendship. He appeared clothed in a purple robe, and by his side was a radiant figure, which said, "He is a martyr, and more than a martyr." Some years before his death there had been observed on his forehead the print, as it were, of a red cross, a sign, for so it was regarded by all, of the predilection shown to this mortified soul by the Father of Mercies and of his conformity to Jesus Crucified. During his last illness he had taken pains to conceal this favour from the eyes of his friends, but not with entire success; and one of those who were most frequently with him, M. de la Pérouse, perceiving that one arm of this cross, which seemed to spring from the midst of a heart in flames, was imperfectly formed, once said to him, "Father, your cross has only one arm." "My child," answered the sick man, "that is because my cross is not yet finished;" meaning that he had still much to suffer. M. de Bretonvilliers, who wished to ascertain the truth, deposes that on the second or third day after M. Olier's death he saw this cross distinctly marked upon his forehead, and that many others were also eye-witnesses of the fact.

On the 5th of April, the body, after being embalmed and placed in a leaden coffin, which was inclosed in one of oak, was borne to the parish church of St. Sulpice, all the Curés of Paris, with more than two hundred other ecclesiastics, assisting at the obsequies in surplice and stole; and on the 9th was celebrated another solemn function, in which all the clergy of the Seminary and of the Community took part, in the presence of a large concourse of the parishioners. M. de Maupas, Bishop of Le Puy, preached the funeral sermon, in which he likened the deceased to King David, who had made war on the enemies of God's people and subdued them by the might of his virtues, his prudence, and his zeal for God, no less than by his magnanimity and courage. Nor did he fail to recount that instance of his generous abnegation which has been mentioned in this narrative. "I knew a Bishop," he said, striking his breast, to signify that it was himself of whom he spoke,—"I knew a Bishop who besought him, even on his knees and with uplifted hands, to accept his bishopric, and could not succeed in gaining his consent." Space forbids our transferring to these pages the panegyrics in French and Latin, in prose and verse, of which this great pastor was the theme; we must content ourselves with citing the few simple words in which St. Vincent de Paul reported to his Priests of the Mission the eulogium passed upon him at a Conference of St. Lazare which took place a few days after his decease. "The ecclesiastics," he said, "who assembled here on Tuesday last took as the subject of their conference the special virtues which they had severally observed in M. Olier, who belonged to their society; and, among other things which were mentioned, the one they accounted most remarkable was that this great servant of God was always disposed to speak disparagingly of himself, and that of all the virtues the one he particularly cultivated was humility."

The body was deposited, temporarily, in the upper chapel of the Seminary, under a mausoleum of wood covered with black velvet; but in the year 1684 the then Superior, M. Tronson, in fulfilment of M. Bretonvilliers's last will and testament, caused it to be laid in the ground in the centre of the lower chapel, which was at the same time paved with black and white marble. This was deemed more consonant with the simplicity which the Seminary, like its founder, always affected than would have been a raised monument of greater pretension. A slab over the tomb bore the following inscription:—

Pugnant alibi mærores et gaudia,
Huc conspirant,
Ubi suo Christus triumphat in milite,
Ubi Sacerdos Apostolicus jacet,
Joannes-Jacobus Olier,
Pastor Sancti Sulpitii, Seminarii institutor,
Fundator et primus Superior;
Quem suspexit Lutetia
In animi simplicitate prudentem,
In cordis humilitate magnanimum,
In operationis suavitate potentem.
In hoc suburbio
Suis Babylonem sudoribus curavit,
Clerum suis in Gallia provocavit exemplis,
Novi orbis saluti suo zelo providit,
Seminariorum tandem erectione,
Scriptis et verbi energia,
Clericalis ubique splendorem dignitatis
Mirifice propagavit;
Tum diuturnæ morbo paralysis
Christo confixus cruci,
Dum Superioris munus obiret,
Parisiis obiit anno Domini 1657, ætatis 48.

Sorrow and joy, elsewhere opposed,
Here find themselves united,
Where Christ triumphs in His champion,
Where lies that Apostolic priest,
Jean-Jacques Olier,
Pastor of St. Sulpice,
Institutor, founder, and first superior of the Seminary.
In him Paris revered a man
Wise in simplicity of soul,
Magnanimous in humility of heart,
Mighty in suavity of word and work.
In this suburb
By his pastoral toils he healed another Babylon,
By his example provoked to emulation the clergy of France,
By his zeal promoted the salvation of the new world,
By the erection of seminaries,
By his writings, and by his powerful preaching,
He everywhere wonderfully increased
The splendour of the clerical dignity.
At length, by disease of lingering paralysis,
Fastened with Christ to the cross,
He died at Paris,
While still discharging his office of Superior,
In the year of the Lord 1657 and of his age the 48th.

His heart was preserved in a silver casket, on which were engraved the monograms of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, encircled with flames; and in another vase of the same material was inclosed his tongue. These two portions of the mortal remains of their holy founder are all that have been left to the Seminarists of St. Sulpice. In the evil days of 1795, the coffin was carried away for the sake of the lead and its contents were thrown into some neighbouring cemetery, notwithstanding all the precautions that had been taken by the then Superior, M. Emery, to prevent the desecration. As some sort of compensation (observes the pious biographer of M. Olier), the Seminary possesses the remains of another disciple of Père de Condren, the Cardinal de Bérulle,* who, as institutor of the French Oratory, was the first to labour for an object which to M. Olier it was given to realize, and which the Society he founded continues at this day with unremitting energy to fulfil.

* At the end of the year 1793, the body of Cardinal de Bérulle was secretly conveyed from the Rue St. Honoré to the *hôtel* of M. Amable-Pierre-Thomas de Bérulle, formerly President of the Parliament of Grenoble, where it remained till 1840, when, on the 21st of August in that year, M. Garnier being Superior of St. Sulpice, it was transported processionally to the chapel of the Seminary and there deposited. Haussage, *Vie du Cardinal de Bérulle*, vol. iii. pp. 511–513.

CHAPTER II.

SUPERNATURAL GIFTS AND GRACES.

M. BAUDRAND, who was M. Olier's fourth successor in the pastoral charge of St. Sulpice, has left the following description of his personal appearance. "He was of middle height, with a distinguished air and an easy carriage. His complexion was of the sanguine order, and he was delicately constituted, although he would have been by no means deficient in strength and vigour if he had not impaired his health by his fasts, long watchings, and severe penances. He was fair, with a rather florid colour, a full face, an aquiline nose, and a broad, smooth forehead. His eyes were bright, and there was a fire in them tempered with an engaging sweetness. The whole expression was refined and intelligent, his mouth of moderate size, his lips red; he had a good voice, the tones silvery and flexible; his utterance was distinct and agreeable; his gesture, while expressive of devotion, was perfectly natural, and gave effect to an eloquence that was both manly and elevated, and so captivating that, at once and without effort, he delighted the mind and won the heart. To sum up this description, he had handsome, regular features and a pleasing countenance, to which was added an air of so much grace, majesty, and modesty that it was impossible to approach him without conceiving sentiments of esteem and respect, and having one's heart raised to God. His intellect," adds M. Baudrand, "was quick, ardent, and penetrating, rapid in its conceptions, and endowed with a large capacity for the acquisition of knowledge. The lights which were divinely communicated to him in prayer were of a far higher order than those which he had acquired by his own labour. To hear him expatiating on the deepest mysteries of our religion, would have seemed to you like listening, not to a man living an ordinary life on earth, but to a St. Paul rapt to the third heaven or a St. John the Evangelist prophesying in his

desert. Not only were his conceptions most sublime, but he had the gift of expressing them with so much brilliancy, clearness, and grace that you could not fail to recognize in them something more than human."

Of his marvellous force of eloquence several proofs have incidentally been given in the preceding pages, but it deserves a mention among those extraordinary graces some account of which remains to be presented to the reader. Of these none was more remarkable than his gift of reading the secrets of men's hearts and foretelling the future, of which M. de Bretonvilliers says that he witnessed innumerable instances, as well in his own person as in that of others. One day, in particular, when he was walking with him in the Rue des Canettes, they met a person who, in conversation, concealed something from him. M. Olier at once told him of it, to the other's great astonishment; and on M. de Bretonvilliers asking him afterwards how he had become acquainted with a circumstance of which he could not possibly have had any previous knowledge, he made this reply: "All things are visible in God, and with a far greater clearness than they can be seen in themselves." M. Leschassier has rendered the same testimony. "He could see into the very bottom of the heart," he writes, "and often told persons, still living, of thoughts they had had which they had never communicated to any human being, and which from their very nature he could not have inferred by any process of natural reasoning."

Brother John of the Cross, who was charged with the distribution of alms in the parish, has left a similar attestation in writing. For six months he was tormented with a dread that he had intruded himself into an office to which God had not called him; that all his exertions in behalf of the bashful poor were the effect of mere habit; and that, if he would save his soul, he must abandon his present employment and take to manual labour. His interior distress was so great that his health was affected to a degree which excited remark, and M. Olier's attention was directed to the fact. The servant of God sent for him, and before the other could utter a word thus addressed him: "Are you to be for ever the sport of the devil? Do not listen to him; he is a lying spirit, who wants to make you quit the work which God has set you to do. Is it not true that for some time past you have had no sentiment of devotion towards God? I know very well what it is that afflicts you: you think that God has not called you to the service of the poor; but I tell you in His name

that it is His will you should thus employ yourself; yes, I assure you in the most positive manner; never doubt it again." In an instant, as he himself deposes, his mind was at rest: it was filled with calmness and peace, and he never after experienced the slightest temptation on the subject.

On several occasions the man of God reminded persons of secret acts of mortification which they were in the habit of practising, but for some reason or other had deferred or omitted. "It is not enough," he said, "to do the things that God requires of us; we must do them at the time prescribed to us." M. de Bretonvilliers relates an instance of a person who had made a promise to God which he gradually ceased fulfilling. To his astonishment, M. Olier one day reproached him, with tears in his eyes, for his infidelity, and at the same time showed an intimate acquaintance with other particulars the knowledge of which he had supposed to be confined to his own breast. Throwing himself at the feet of the servant of God, he confessed his fault and lost no time in repairing his omission. Another who had been consulted on an affair of some importance under an engagement of secrecy wished to have M. Olier's advice in the matter, but was met with the objection that to suggest anything to the purpose it was necessary to be made acquainted with the exact facts of the case. On the other replying that he was not at liberty to speak more particularly, the holy man made two or three turns in his room, then, as if he had received the requisite instructions, he entered into the whole circumstances of the case, and gave his advice accordingly. After a conference, in which he had spoken to his clergy on the subject of poverty, one of them retired in much distress of mind, not feeling in himself the heart to aspire to a perfection so difficult. "Ah, Monsieur," said M. Olier to him shortly after, "this poverty causes you a great deal of trouble;" and he began forthwith to tell him all that had been passing within him.

A young lady of rank had resolved, after much prayer to God, to become a Carmelite nun. Through the assistance of M. Olier, who was her director, every obstacle had been overcome and arrangements were being made for her reception, when she was suddenly assailed by a most violent temptation. While walking with a friend in the promenade called the Cours, the enemy of souls displayed so vividly before her imagination the delights and splendours of the world that she persuaded herself that she had no vocation for the religious life, and even doubted whether she would continue to take

M. Olier as her spiritual guide. But the illusion was not to be of long duration. The next day she received a message from the servant of God to the effect that he had an important piece of advice to give her. She went at once, and scarcely were the first salutations over when he astounded her by saying, "The question, my child, is not whether you can save your soul as well in the world as in religion, but whether you would be doing the will of God and fulfilling His designs regarding you. Go, go," he added; "there is no time to lose." He then repeated in detail, and with the most perfect exactness, all that had been passing in her mind; and so profoundly was she moved by this proof of his marvellous discernment that on the very next day she entered the Carmelite convent. Her vocation proved to be a true and solid one, and for seventeen years she practised all the austerities of her rule with fidelity and fervour.

The following is an instance of a different kind. A priest had under his direction a person who was supposed to have arrived at the highest degrees of perfection, and whom he looked upon as quite a saint in the matter of revelations and other extraordinary graces. One night he dreamed that he saw M. Olier, who warned him that his penitent was deceiving him, and exposed all her cheats and impostures. On awaking he thought no more of the matter; but great was his surprise when, chancing to meet M. Olier a few months afterwards, the man of God, as if he wished to confirm what he had previously described in detail, bade him in general terms beware of the person in question. It was not long before the priest acquired a perfect knowledge of all the arts which the miserable creature had practised upon him, and found them to be exactly and in all particulars such as had been communicated to him in his dream.*

The secret influences which this saintly man exercised over other holy souls were not among the least astonishing of his supernatural

* The thought-reading which is being practised by experts at the present day differs essentially from that which is here ascribed to M. Olier, and which has been so frequently exhibited by saints and saintly persons, in that it is confined to things which may be said to lie on the surface of the mind and of which the imagination or the senses are cognisant. It does not extend to purely intellectual acts or to the designs and intents of the heart. St. Teresa, in her writings, more than once alludes to the limits within which the devil has power to read the thoughts, as contradistinguished from those inner regions of the soul to which he has no access; but our modern thought-readers do not appear as yet to have got beyond the perception of some bare material fact as imaged in the mind of the subject, or the merest superficial impressions.

gifts. So many examples have been incidentally given in the course of this history that one in addition may here suffice. The Mère de St. Gabriel, Superioress of the Nuns of La Miséricorde at Paris, relates that frequently, while conversing with him or merely being in his presence, she experienced such powerful impressions of divine grace that, not only for the time but for a month afterwards, her only desire was to be separated from creatures that she might occupy herself with God alone. It not unfrequently happened that these effects lasted till she saw him again, when they would be renewed with such abundance and intensity that at times she was unable to utter a word. She adds that, after speaking to him, she found herself delivered from habitual imperfections of which she had not said a word to him, and which she had made no particular effort to overcome.

The power he possessed of relieving mental suffering was no less wonderful. Sometimes he would tell persons so afflicted to go to such or such a church and beg our Lady's blessing, and they found themselves perfectly delivered. Mlle. de Roguée, who afterwards became a Sister of Christian Instruction and eventually Superioress of the house, has left a written attestation of what happened to herself. For five or six months she endured interior trials of the most distressing kind: feelings of rebellion against God, thoughts against faith, temptations of every kind. She began to despair of her salvation, and fell into a state of melancholy and despondency, the more strange and inexplicable that hitherto she had enjoyed the sweets of a most tender and sensible devotion. Nothing could afford her consolation, and her confessor was powerless to assist her. While in this miserable condition, she was taken to the Seminary by Mlle. de Richelieu, who wished to consult M. Olier on business of her own. Another lady also accompanied her. When the interview was over, Mlle. de Roguée went to beg his blessing, and he asked her whether she wished to devote herself to the service of the Lord. She replied that she had long had a desire to do so, but had not as yet made a beginning. Then, looking earnestly at her, he said, "My daughter, I should wish to speak to you in private; when I am able to see you I will let you know." A few days later, he sent her word to come and see him at Issy, where he then was, and, acting on the advice of her confessor, she resolved to tell him all she suffered. But for this M. Olier gave her no opportunity; he began speaking of the interior of Mary,* and of the ways of honouring it. As he spoke his words

* See *supra*, page 435.

seemed to ravish her heart, and the sufferings under which she had been so long labouring ceased as completely as if (to use her own expressions) they had been removed bodily, and the peace and joy of the blessed had been put in their place. She so utterly forgot them that she went away without saying a word on the subject; nay, for several months she had no present recollection of what she had endured, and the distressing feelings never returned. In their stead she experienced a love of our Lord and His holy Mother and an interior joy such as it was impossible to describe. He bade her tell no one but her confessor what he had said to her, but to go to our Lady's altar at St. Sulpice and make an offering of herself to that good Mother. "As I returned," she says, "I was so absorbed in the thought of what I had heard that my friends could not extract a word from me; my happiness was almost too great to bear; my feet seemed not to touch the ground, and my companions had difficulty in keeping up with me. What astonished me most was that our blessed Father said nothing to me about my sufferings, and yet I was delivered instantaneously. What I have here written," she adds, "is so true in every particular that I am ready to sign it with my blood."

After such proofs of his power in the matter of spiritual infirmities it need cause no surprise to be told that this holy priest possessed also the gift of healing bodily diseases. The Mère de St. Gabriel was afflicted with a spitting of blood, for which all remedies had proved unavailing. M. Olier, going to see her, found her in such a state of debility that she had been obliged to take to her bed. "My daughter," he said to her with all simplicity, "I will not have you spit blood any more; I forbid you doing it." On the instant the disorder ceased, and during the eighteen years that had elapsed up to the time when she made her deposition, it had never once returned. M. Olier has himself recorded the following. M. de Villars, who became Archbishop of Vienne, was seized, while a student at St. Sulpice, with what appeared to be a mortal illness. The physicians gave him up, but, writes the man of God, "our Lord said to me, 'I will restore him to you;' and so it really came to pass, the physicians themselves regarding it as a miracle." Many similar instances are related in his *Mémoires;* the sick whom he visited finding themselves cured while he was speaking to them although he had not asked God to restore them to health. Upon which he says, with that piety and humility which distinguished

him, "This shows me how little part the ministers of Jesus Christ have in the operations of His goodness and power, seeing that He produces the most holy effects by means of those who are most imperfect and most unholy, waiting for neither their concurrence nor their desire." The numerous cures which were wrought by his prayers, or, as it seemed, by his mere presence, inspired the sick of the parish with such an extraordinary confidence in his power to succour them, that many thought themselves sure of recovering if once they were recommended to his assistance; and this confidence, it need scarcely be said, was in no way diminished after his death. A few extracts will here be made from the mass of authentic declarations, the originals of which are preserved in the Seminary of St. Sulpice.

Mlle. Manse, of whom we have already heard in connection with the colony of Montréal, broke her arm by a fall on the ice, and through the unskilfulness of the surgeons, who set the limb but did not perceive that the thumb was dislocated, she entirely lost the use of her hand. After nearly two years of much suffering she returned to France for the purpose of obtaining the best advice, and at the same time expediting the departure of the Hospitalières of La Flèche, who had been prevented leaving for Canada by want of funds, and also by the opposition of certain persons in power, who wished to substitute another community in their place. Unable to travel alone, or even to dress herself, she was accompanied on her voyage by the Sœur Bourgeois, who has left a circumstantial account of the whole case. On reaching Paris, the friends of Mlle. Manse called in the aid of the most experienced surgeons of the capital, but, after trying various measures, they one and all declared that the recovery of the limb was perfectly hopeless; and for eighteen months she employed no remedies whatever. Submitting to what she believed to be the will of God, she directed all her thoughts to the affair of the Hospitalières, although there appeared but small prospect of being able to procure from the charity of the faithful the necessary funds for their establishment. However, she had a desire to visit the chapel in which lay the body of M. Olier, for whom she entertained a great veneration, not with any view of obtaining a cure, but simply to honour one whom she regarded as a saint of God, and to obtain the benefit of his prayers for the accomplishment of a work in which he had taken special interest when alive. She went accompanied by the Sœur Bourgeois, and

the day she chose was the feast of the Purification (1659), a mystery for which she knew that M. Olier had a particular devotion. The account of what followed shall be given in her own words.

"As I was on the point of entering the chapel in which his body reposes, the thought came into my mind to beg of God, by the merits of His servant, that He would be pleased to grant me a little strength and relief in my arm, that I might have the use of it for the most necessary things, as dressing myself and arranging our altar at Montréal. 'O my God,' I said, 'I ask not for a miracle, for I am unworthy of it, but for a little relief, and that I may have the use of my arm.' As I entered the chapel a gush of joy came over me, so extraordinary that I never experienced anything like it in my life. My heart was so full that I have not words to express what I felt; my eyes were like two unfailing fountains of tears; and all this was accompanied with so much sweetness that I felt as though I were wholly dissolved in tenderness, without any effort or exertion on my part to excite in myself emotions to which I am not naturally disposed. I can only express it by saying that it was an effect of the great pleasure I felt at the thought of the happiness enjoyed by this blessed servant of God. I spoke to him as though I beheld him before me, and with even greater confidence, knowing that he had a far more intimate acquaintance with me than when he was in the world; that he saw my needs, and the sincerity of my heart, which had concealed nothing from him.

"I assisted at the Holy Sacrifice, and communicated, still enjoying this extraordinary interior sweetness. I never gave my arm a thought till Mass was over, when, M. de Bretonvilliers going away to the parish church to take part in a procession, I begged him to give me the heart of M. Olier that I might touch my arm with it, telling him that I wished to have nothing more to do with *the blood of bulls and heifers* for my cure. From this moment I had a confident assurance that my prayer would be heard. He brought it to me and departed; for myself, thinking of all the graces which God had put into this saintly heart, I took the precious deposit in my left hand, and laid it on my right, enveloped as it was in a scarf. At the same instant I felt that my hand was set free, and that it held up the weight of the leaden casket without support; this surprised or, rather, exceedingly amazed me, and I felt moved to bless and praise the Divine Goodness for vouchsafing me the grace of showing forth in myself the glory and the merit of His holy servant. At the

same time I felt an extraordinary heat spread through my whole arm, to the very tips of the fingers, and from that moment I recovered the use of my hand; although the dislocation still continues I am able to use it without pain, which is even more wonderful.

"I declare that what I have here set down is a true and sincere account, in proof whereof I have written and signed it with the same hand the use of which was restored to me. Paris, February 13th, 1659. JEANNE MANSE."

On returning from the procession, M. de Bretonvilliers found Mlle. Manse bathed in tears, and transported with joy to such a degree that she could not speak a word. The fame of the miracle was soon spread through Paris, and so great was the veneration excited among the populace for her who had been the subject of it, that they would cut off pieces of her dress as she walked in the streets, and she was obliged to go about in a carriage in order to escape the crowds that pressed upon her. Of all the attestations to the fact not the least important is that of the surgeons of Montréal, who certified to the reality of the cure eighteen months after it had taken place. The author of the memoirs of M. de Laval, first Bishop of Quebec, states that Mlle. Manse retained the use of her hand till the day of her death.

This miracle became the means of accomplishing the other object which had brought her to Paris, and that in a manner which surpassed all her hopes and expectations. In the number of those whose attention was now directed to her were some generous souls who came forward with funds enough, and more than enough, to supply all she wanted for her foundation; and on her return to Canada she had the happiness of taking back with her the Hospitalières of La Flèche. The history of these devoted women furnishes us with another instance of the assistance rendered by the servant of God after death to those who commended themselves to his prayers. It has been said that the establishment at Ville Marie had encountered strong opposition in influential quarters; scarcely, therefore, had they arrived before they received an order to retire, and, but for having brought with them the contract signed by M. Olier, they would have been compelled to resign the management of the hospital into other hands. At this juncture M. de la Dauversière was ruined by an unexpected reverse of fortune, and the funds that had been raised for the hospital, having been put to his account, were irrecoverably lost. Their condition in consequence became

most pitiable; for five-and-twenty years their almost sole subsistence was a little black bread, and salt meat of the worst description. Their clothes were so repeatedly patched and mended that it would have been difficult to say of what materials they had been originally made. Their loghouse, ill put together, was so open to the outward air that it was impossible for them to keep themselves warm. During the severest part of the winter their beds were covered with snow four inches deep, and their cells so filled with it, that immediately on rising they were obliged to carry it away on shovels. To these terrible privations were added continual alarms from the Iroquois, whose practice it was to roast their prisoners over a slow fire, sometimes keeping them thus cruelly tortured for eight days together. The alarm-bell was for ever ringing, and affrays with the savages would take place within musket-shot of their miserable dwelling. In this deplorable condition they were encouraged and supported by the servant of God, as appears from a circular letter written on occasion of the death of one of their number, the Sœur Maillet, a native of Saumur. Several times, while engaged in prayer, she beheld M. Olier in glory, who consoled her in her interior sufferings, and bade her abandon all fear for the safety of the house. Once when she was more than usually afflicted, he appeared to her, with M. de la Dauversière, and assured her that the work was of God, and that it would subsist in spite of the violence and opposition of men; that God would extract glory to Himself out of the persecutions raised against a house founded on the cross; that, in fine, being Daughters of St. Joseph, and consecrated to the honour and imitation of the Holy Family on earth, they were called to walk by the way of humiliation and contradiction. This prediction received the fullest accomplishment, for, in spite of the terrible assaults to which it was exposed, their house was solidly established; and to this day, after all the changes through which the country has passed, the Hospital Nuns of Ville Marie continue to serve the colony by their charitable labours and to live in strict accordance with the spirit of their rule.

From the many other duly authenticated miracles wrought by his intercession, space forbids more than a brief selection.

A priest who owed to M. Olier, under God, his vocation to the ecclesiastical state was afflicted with deafness for three years, so as to be able to hear confessions only on one side. On Holy Saturday, 1660, having been thus engaged a long time without changing his

position, he left the confessional in order to recover a little from his fatigue, when the thought came into his mind to beg the servant of God in all simplicity, as he had been the cause of his entering the sacred ministry, to obtain for him the power of discharging its duties more efficiently. After making his prayer he returned to his confessional, and found, to his surprise, that his petition had been granted. M. Tulloue, Regent of the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, who had attended the priest in question, made formal attestation that a cure so instantaneous and complete had not been effected by natural means.

Pierre Trescartes, a marine, was desperately wounded in an engagement with the English, September 29th, 1666. His left arm was fractured by a splinter in the most frightful manner, and the hand nearly severed from the wrist. The surgeon would have amputated the limb at once, but, seeing the man's reluctance, deferred the operation until landing, which was not effected for ten or twelve days, when he was conveyed to the hospital at Havre. The wound meanwhile had assumed an alarming character; the surgeons took out several pieces of bone, and would have proceeded to amputation but that the man, notwithstanding the excruciating pains which he suffered day and night, refused his consent. He was shortly after pronounced to be in so dangerous a state that it was feared he would die under the operation, if attempted. One of the nuns of the hospital, Madeleine Mirrhé, had preserved, out of devotion to the man of God, a bit of linen which had been dipped in his blood; she spoke to the wounded sailor of the great holiness of M. Olier, and proposed that he should make a novena to obtain his intercession. The man readily consented, only expressing a wish first to confess and communicate. Touched with his faith and piety, Madeleine went and prostrated herself before the Blessed Sacrament, begging our Lord to manifest the sanctity of His servant by the cure of this poor sufferer. On applying the linen to the wound she bade him say nothing to the surgeon, but remove the relic when he came to dress it. While she was engaged in performing her pious office the man fell into a peaceful slumber, as though no longer sensible of the pains he had been enduring; in fact, from that moment they entirely ceased, the fever subsided, and by the next morning the wound had assumed an appearance so completely different that the surgeons, astonished at the rapid change that had taken place, no longer recommended amputation. On the last day of the novena

(November 26th) he left his bed, and went into the chapel to return thanks to God; four days afterwards he quitted the hospital perfectly healed. The fact was formally attested, not only by the Sister, but by two medical men and one of the surgeons of the house, who declared that the cure appeared to them altogether extraordinary and marvellous. This was also the testimony which Trescartes himself rendered in the chapel of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, whither he went to thank the man of God at his tomb for the favour accorded to him.

Marguerite Vieillard, a nun of this same hospital, suffered violent pains in her eyes, which no remedies relieved. Removing the bandages, she substituted a rag stained with M. Olier's blood. The pain immediately ceased; she heard Mass the same morning with her eyes unbandaged, and the next day was about her duties in the town.

M. Boucaut, a Canon of St. Nicholas at Craon, lay dying, when Marie-Gabrielle Rousseau, a lady who was held in high consideration at Angers for her charitable zeal, sent him, by the hands of M. Rigault, one of the Canons of St. Peter in that town, a piece of M. Olier's *camisole* (under-waistcoat),* which she had obtained from the master of ceremonies at St. Sulpice. At the moment he reached the house prayers were being recited as for a person in his agony. M. Rigault approached the bed and said, "I bring you something of M. Olier's; have confidence in God, and you shall obtain relief through the intercession of His servant." The dying man, raising his eyes to heaven, took the relic, and dipped it in some broth, of which he drank a little. On doing so he was seized with violent pains, which, however, were followed by effects which were productive of complete relief; his malady, which was of a most distressing kind, rapidly disappeared, and, in spite of the prognostications of the physicians, who considered his case past remedy, he perfectly recovered.

At Le Puy many extraordinary cures took place, which were regarded as miraculous. Among others may be specified those of M. Colomb and M. de Béget, both Canons of the cathedral, with the latter of which a touching incident is connected. M. de Béget

* This *camisole* is still preserved at the Seminary, together with an attestation, signed by M. Louis Tronson, certifying its authenticity. Among other relics of the servant of God are a surplice, a *camisole* of cotton, a portion of a towel stained with his blood, and the napkin that was used to tie up his chin immediately after death.

had spoken one day to M. Olier of a certain priest whose poverty was such that he possessed only one old cassock. The servant of God immediately sent him his own; but M. de Béget, from a motive of veneration, kept his friend's cassock, and gave the priest another of equal value in its stead. God, it would seem, would show how pleasing to him were the charity of the one and the devotion of the other; for, being afflicted with a pleurisy which confined him to his bed in a state of complete helplessness, M. de Béget was perfectly restored to health by applying to his side the cassock that had belonged to the holy man. So great, indeed, was the estimation in which this relic was held that it was cut into several pieces; and by these many incontestable cures were wrought, as was certified by M. Antoine du Fornel, the Vicar-General, whom the Bishop had appointed to make formal inquiry into the facts. One of the most remarkable cases was that of Anne Feulha, an Augustinian nun, at St. Didier. She was reduced to such a state of weakness that she was unable to stand, but by application of a piece of this same cassock she completely recovered her health and strength. A priest of the place, named François Néron, ridiculed the whole affair, declaring that the cure was all imaginary, and that the best that could be said about it was that the nun in question was a weak-headed visionary. However, a week had not elapsed before he was seized with a violent pain in his head, accompanied with a burning fever. In this state his mind underwent a complete revolution; he humbled himself before God, and asked for a piece of the cassock, which he applied to his head, at the same time fervently invoking the aid of God's servant. M. Olier revenged himself in the way he was wont to do while on earth; the priest who had doubted his merits was instantly cured, and made deposition in person before the Vicar-General of the fact as it had occurred.

These marvellous cures recurring with almost daily frequency, the Bishop felt it incumbent upon him to institute a further inquiry in strict juridical form. To this end, on May 4th, 1658, he nominated as his commissary M. Balthasar de Ravissac, doctor in theology and canon of the cathedral, to whom he gave powers to summon witnesses and to visit with ecclesiastical penalties any who might refuse to render testimony when called upon to do so. Two of the cases which were attested before him made a great sensation at the time. The first was that of Dame Catherine Rousset, who, like the woman in the Gospel, had been afflicted with an issue of blood, which at

length arrived at such an excess that, had it continued, she must have died. In this extremity, it came into her mind that she had received from Mme. de Rullier, a religious of the Order of St. Bernard, a small piece of a maniple which had belonged to M. Olier, and a similar portion of which had been instrumental in healing another person of the same malady as that from which she was herself suffering. Discarding all human remedies and strong in divine faith, she began fervently imploring the servant of God, when, on applying the precious relic, in less than half an hour the disorder ceased and, finding herself perfectly cured, she rose from her bed, and on the morrow was able to resume her usual occupations. This she certified on oath before the Episcopal commissary.

The other instance, similarly attested, shows us the servant of God once more in the company of that sainted nun who exercised so extraordinary an influence on his life and mission in the world. There lived at Auzon, six miles from Brioude, a woman of the world, by name Françoise de l'Espinasse du Passage, who was devoted to its vanities in no ordinary degree. This lady, coming to Le Puy the year M. Olier died, went to confession at the church of the Seminary, and was so touched by divine grace that from that day she became as remarkable for her piety as she had hitherto been for her worldliness. She converted five of her sisters, and taught them mental prayer, in which she herself spent three hours every day; and through her influence the whole family was transformed into a sort of religious community. In the month of May, 1661, she became alarmingly ill, and the physicians declared that she had not an hour to live. As she lay apparently at the point of death, her sisters made a vow for her to M. Olier and the Mère Agnès de Jésus; and shortly after, falling asleep, she thought she saw two persons coming towards her clothed in garments of a marvellous whiteness, one of which seemed to be the servant of God and the other the venerable mother; but before she could distinguish their features they vanished. On awaking she found herself free from fever and every other ailment, although no crisis had taken place to account for a change so rapid. Her brother, the *seigneur* of Silloux, and all who were present when she awoke attributed her recovery to a supernatural cause, and she ever after declared her firm conviction that she was indebted for her life to the intercession of the blessed servant of God.

With another instance, which happened in our own time and was

canonically authenticated by the Ordinary, this narrative shall close. On October 27th, 1846, the Sœur Marie-Susanne Dufresne, a Hospitalière of St. Joseph, Montréal, was seized with an attack of pleuro-pneumonia, and on December 10th was declared to be past hope of recovery. On the previous day M. de Charbonnel, a priest of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, being summoned to a sick man at the Hospital, gave one of the Sisters a scapular made of that very piece of M. Olier's cassock to which M. de Béget, his uncle, owed his restoration to health, begging her to mend it. While reciting the Litany of St. Joseph in choir, this religious felt herself powerfully moved to take the scapular to her suffering sister, being possessed with a profound conviction that the servant of God would have pity on her. Being unable to go herself, she asked the Sœur de la Dauversière, the Infirmarian, to apply the scapular to the dying woman. That very morning Sœur Marie-Susanne had fainted several times, the medical man affirmed that nothing more could be done for her, and her confessor had already recited over her the recommendation of a departing soul. On the scapular being presented to her she kissed it, and thought of all the miracles she had read of in the Life of the great priest; and her confidence in his power with God was so strong that she said to him in her heart, "I am sure that you can cure me, but I ask only that the holy will of God may be accomplished in me." She was so utterly incapacitated that she could not herself apply the scapular to her side, and her pains became so acute that she swooned away. All that night, and during the morning of the following day, her sufferings increased to such a degree that she lost all recollection of the relic which she bore about her. Her teeth were loose, her gums, palate, and tongue were swollen and bleeding; her weakness was so excessive that she was unable to carry her hand to her mouth, and had to be fed with a spoon. Suddenly, at a quarter past seven in the evening of December 10th, it seemed as if a hand passed gently over her from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet; as it passed, she felt her strength return in every part of her body, and she knew that she was cured: she sat up in her bed, and turned from side to side, which she had not been able to do since the beginning of the malady; at the same time she experienced a strong desire for food, and partook, with appetite and without the slightest pain, of the light nourishment that was brought her. Soon she was able to leave her bed and put on her habit; on the following morning she assisted at

Mass, kneeling nearly the whole time without sense of fatigue, and joined afterwards in saying office with the rest of the community.

The whole particulars of this extraordinary case are given at length by M. Faillon in the words of the Sœur Dufresne herself, who solemnly attested the same. The affidavit of her medical attendant is couched in the following terms: "On the 11th of December, to my great surprise, all the symptoms of the malady had entirely disappeared; the affection of the gums of which she complained the evening before was not even visible; the sick woman walked quite well, and came to meet me. I have seen her since almost every day; she continues perfectly well, and after a careful examination, both by auscultation and by percussion, I have perceived no vestige of the disorder, no affection of the lungs or of any other organ." Two other doctors of Montréal, who had been consulted in the case, declared, after a full and free inquiry into all the circumstances, that the Sister was now in a perfect state of health, and that, with all their professional knowledge and experience, they were unable to assign any cause, physical, natural, or medicinal, which could account for a cure so instantaneous, complete, and permanent.

All that now remains is for the present writer to declare, in the words of the Abbé Faillon, that "whether the cures which have been here recounted be of the number of those which our Lord empowered His disciples to work on the bodies and souls of men, when He said to them, Heal the sick,* we do not venture to pronounce; neither have we the rashness to affirm that the visions and revelations narrated in this Life ought to be ranked among those to which the Royal Prophet alluded when he said, 'Thou spokest in a vision to Thy saints.'† To Holy Church alone does it belong to discern infallibly the finger of God in operations which are of an extraordinary character; and, in conformity with the decrees of the Apostolic See touching this matter, we submit anew to its judgment whatever we have written concerning the virtues of M. Olier, as also whatever in this history appears to surpass the laws of nature."

* St. Matthew x. 3. † Psalm cxxxviii. 19.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

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1. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

Page 100. A memoir of this distinguished lady,—an important personage in her day, as well on account of her munificent charities and eminent virtues as of her position in the great world (which she never loved) and her influence at Court—has recently been published by the Comte de Bonneau-Avenant. It conveys a lively idea of high society in France during the ministry of her powerful uncle, Cardinal de Richelieu, whose private life and character are also displayed in a new and striking light. Under the latter aspect the book is particularly interesting. To many it will be a surprise to learn that this formidable statesman was, while Bishop of Luçon, the author of several religious works, especially of a treatise on the *Perfection of a Christian* which Boudon, in his *Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale*, much commends.

2. Our Lord's use of His senses in the Blessed Sacrament.

Page 279. M. Olier says that our Lord has no use of His senses therein; and F. Faber (*Blessed Sacrament*, B. II, S. II) regards it as the most probable opinion. But the contrary opinion has the support of many high authorities. F. Dalgairns discusses the question at some length in his book on *Holy Communion* (P. II, C. II). He begins by acknowledging that the majority of theologians are opposed to the view that our Lord can use His senses in the Adorable Host, but says, on the other hand, that some of the greatest names in theology are in favour of it; and he adduces those of the seraphic doctor, St. Bonaventure; Suarez, whom he designates as perhaps the greatest of the second generation of schoolmen; the great Jesuit theologian, Lessius; and Viva, who, he says, may be called the last of the schoolmen yet one who is remarkable for ever recurring to the opinions of the first or medieval schools. He next brings forward Cardinal Cienfuegos, who has devoted a great part of his *Vita Abscondita* to the proof of the opinion in question, and who cites several celebrated theologians in its support. F. Dalgairns concludes by saying that he has sufficiently shown that, "since the 13th century, there has been a permanent opinion in the Church that, whether naturally or by miracle, our Lord can see us from the Host with His bodily eyes and hear us with His outward ears."

To these names may be added that of Cardinal Franzelin, than which none carries with it greater weight at the present day. "This opinion," he says (*De Eucharistia*, Thesis xi.) "appears to me most probable and most pious, not on

account of the testimonies of Scripture and the Fathers, which I find but little conclusive, but because of its connection with the dignity of the Most Sacred Humanity of our Lord, and with the end and object of the sacrament by means of which Christ is pleased to hold with His faithful a commerce not only spiritual but corporal;" and he then quotes with strong approbation the sentiments of Cardinal Cienfuegos, which are also given by F. Dalgairns, to whose instructive pages the reader is referred.

3. Duelling.

Page 288. The edict against duelling and blasphemy was literally the first state document to which Louis XIV. affixed his sign manual after declaring his majority; and this he did at the urgent request of his mother, who desired that he should commence his personal reign with an act of religion. During her regency, that is, within the space of eight years, more than 940 gentlemen had lost their lives in duels. (*La Duchesse d'Aiguillon*, p. 394.)

At the present day in Prussia, a military man who refuses a challenge is compelled to leave the army, although duelling is condemned and punishable by law; and few there are who have the Christian piety or the moral courage to encounter the social degradation and disgrace which a refusal entails.

A direful catalogue of facts illustrative of the prevalence and fatal results of this detestable practice in all the countries of Europe is given in the interesting little book which Mr. S. H. Burke has entitled *Men and Women as they appeared in the Far-Off Time*, pp. 179–189.

4. Cardinal de Retz.

Page 361. Jean-François-Paul de Gondy was the third son of Philippe-Emmanuel, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles d'Or (Hyères), Baron de Montmirail, de Dampierre, et de Villepreux, General of the Galleys, who on the death of his wife became an Oratorian. Born in the year 1613, he was made Coadjutor to his uncle, Jean-François de Gondy, in 1643, with the title of Archbishop of Corinth. According to his own account, his object in taking part with the Frondeurs was to restore the milder form of monarchy which existed in the days of St. Louis; but he was an ambitious and unprincipled man, indefatigable in scheming and agitating for the furtherance of his own interests. Gifted with great natural talents, eloquent in speech, audacious in action, and endowed with singular ability for the conduct of affairs, he was utterly destitute of all vocation for the ecclesiastical state, which he entered merely out of compliance with the wishes of his family, by whom the see of Paris was regarded as a sort of hereditary appanage. To serve his political and personal ends, as he himself avows, he occasionally attended the Conferences of St. Lazare; he studied theology, preached while still in minor orders, disputed with heretics, and was liberal in almsgiving. Yet all the time, as his autobiography testifies, he was an artful intriguer and a habitual debauchee. Not that in his heart he was an unbeliever or despised devotion in others; on the contrary, he seems, in the midst of his worst disorders, to have entertained a sincere admiration for piety and virtue and to have felt some scruples of conscience as to degrading the clerical character in the eyes of the multitude and thus bringing discredit on morality and religion.

In fact, he took such pains to conceal his licentiousness from both clergy and people, and was so guarded and decorous in his exterior behaviour, that many zealous and learned priests of the archdiocese—including even Vincent de Paul, who had been his tutor—were glad to see him promoted to be his uncle's coadjutor, with right of succession.

Having made his peace, to all appearance, with the Court at the termination of the Fronde, he was, in February, 1652, raised to the Cardinalate, but in December of the same year Mazarin caused him to be imprisoned at Vincennes, and subsequently at Nantes, whence by a clever stratagem he contrived to escape in the spring of 1654. During his incarceration at the former place he became Archbishop of Paris by the death of his uncle, and was recognised at once by the Chapter and the clergy. On regaining his liberty he came to England, thence crossed over to Spain, and sojourned awhile at Rome. On the death of Innocent X. and the election of Alexander VII. he left Rome, and for seven years wandered over the continent. At length, in 1662, he was allowed by Louis XIV. to return to Paris on condition of his resigning his see, which accordingly he did, and would have resigned his Cardinalate as well if the Pope (Clement X.) had permitted it. He was employed by the King on several delicate missions to the Holy See, and subsequently retired to St. Denis, of which he had been made abbot, there to pass the remainder of his days in strict seclusion from the world. "It would have been difficult," says one of his biographers, "to recognise in this devout recluse the unprincipled intriguer and turbulent agitator of the Fronde." A recluse, no doubt, he was, but how far his devotion was genuine or assumed is a problem which has been variously treated. One mark of true repentance he certainly gave in selling his estates to pay his debts. During his seclusion he wrote his *Mémoires*, in which he laid bare with unsparing hand, but with no trace either of modesty or regret, the iniquities and follies of his past career. In this respect his autobiography may be said to be unique; certain details, indeed, descriptive of his early years were of so scandalous a character that some unknown hand tore out no less than 250 pages of the manuscript, leaving only a few mutilated fragments sufficient to show the nature of the rest. He died August 24th, 1679, in the same sentiments of piety which he had uniformly exhibited throughout his latter days.

5. Testimonies to the relations which subsisted between M. Olier and the Venerable Mère Agnès de Jésus, and the benefits accruing therefrom to the Church of France.

Page 510. In the decree of Pius VII. March 19, 1808, by which the Mère Agnès was declared Venerable, a general reference is made to the benefits conferred on religion and the clergy of France by her burning zeal and charity, the flames of which ranged far and wide, though she herself remained secluded within the cloisters of her convent at Langeac. But further, and in particular, the Sub-promoter of the Faith declared that this holy nun by her prayers had called down the blessing of Heaven on the labours of the celebrated Abbé Olier, to the great advantage of the clergy and realm of France and the increase of God's glory; and that this was the end and object of their union and of all the relations which had subsisted between these two chosen souls.

The priests of St. Sulpice accordingly have ever venerated the Mère Agnès as

their spiritual mother and special advocate. Writing to the Pope in September, 1701, they declared that to her prayers and travails are due that pursuit of perfection and that unwearied zeal in restoring ecclesiastical discipline which was so conspicuously displayed in the servant of God their founder; while the Cardinal Louis-Antoine de Noailles, in a letter dated March 9, 1703, says that the memory of Agnès de Jésus will ever be held in special benediction because she incited that admirable priest, Olier, to institute seminaries for the clergy, by which the sacerdotal spirit, which had grown cold and, indeed, had become almost extinct (refrigescentem ac fere collapsum) might be again renewed.

The joint letters of the clergy of France to Benedict XIII. in 1725, and to Clement XII. in 1730, in which they solicit the canonization of the Mère Agnès have already been cited. Therein they express their obligation to this holy virgin for having incited that glory and ornament of their body, Jean-Jacques Olier, to lead a life of greater perfection and to become the founder of the Seminary of St. Sulpice; and again when, in 1757, renewed petitions for the same object were addressed to the Holy See, they were based on the selfsame ground: "The Church of France," wrote the Bishop of St. Flour to the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, "takes a particular interest in the beatification of the Mère Agnès because to this holy virgin is ascribed the merit of having communicated to M. Olier, founder of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, the desire of that high perfection in which he made such marvellous progress."

On the introduction of her cause the General of the Dominicans, P. Antoine Cloche, thus deposed: "It was in obedience to the instructions of the Mère Agnès, whom he looked up to as his mother and mistress and whose monitions he regarded as so many oracles from Heaven, that the celebrated Olier, so illustrious for his merits and virtues, founded that most holy seminary which inaugurated the splendour and glory of the sacerdotal order in France and disseminated so many similar institutions throughout the realm, from which the Bishops derived such vast and abundant benefits; benefits which they gratefully acknowledged to be due in their origin to that venerable mother." Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, T. I, pp. 100–103, 126–129. De Lantages et Lucot, *Vie de la Vénérable Mère Agnès de Jésus*, T. II, pp. 571, &c.

6. The Mission of Privas.

Page 540. In order fully to realize the enormous difficulties with which the missionaries had to contend and the magnitude of the success which they achieved, the reader is referred to Part IV. of *Le Duc de Rohan et les Protestants sous Louis XIII.*, par Henri de la Garde, in which a spirited description is given of the events which marked the close of the Huguenot revolt in 1629. The simple fact that the Protestant population rose to arms because a widow who had inherited the *seigneurie* of Privas desired to take to herself a Catholic husband is sufficient to show the inflammable state of men's minds and their inveterate hatred of the Catholic religion and its professors.

7. Self-disparagement.

Page 580. Mention was made at page 451 of M. Olier's dislike of this practice, as being often a subtle form of self-esteem; whereas, in discussing his merits at a

Conference of St. Lazare, the clergy who were present accounted it among his special virtues that he was always disposed to speak disparagingly of himself. But in this there was no real discrepancy between his principles and his practice. There is not a saint in the calendar who did not at times give utterance to similar expressions of self-condemnation; and in doing so they spoke from the profound convictions of their heart. This is something altogether different from that practice of a general self-disparagement, not unusual on the part of the imperfect Christian, which M. Olier disliked and reproved. "To be genuine," he said, "self-humiliation must spring from a sincere desire of losing the good opinion of others." Here, in fact, is the touchstone which tests the sincerity of such self-disparaging speeches. He who has a truly low opinion of himself, and really means what he says, desires to be disparaged and even despised by others; whereas the imperfect Christian who indulges in these self-accusations will shrink from the slightest blame which proceeds from the lips of others, even if he be not sensibly offended by it. He has no intention of being taken at his word, and in his heart will resent it.

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